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Dungeons & Dragons®

3

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# SUPER ENDLESS QUEST™

Adventure Gamebook

ESCAPE  
from  
CASTLE QUARRAS

394-74169-2



By Douglas Niles

All the thrills of the  
**ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®**  
Game in an exciting new **GAMEBOOK!**

# CHARACTER STATS CARD

## ESCAPE FROM CASTLE QUARRAS



**NAME:** Derek Shadowalker

**CHAR. CLASS:** Thief

**SKILL POINTS: (7 total)**

**Fighting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agility:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Stealth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPERIENCE POINTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**HIT POINTS: 20 + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_**

**EQUIPMENT: (4 total)**

sword and scabbard (counts as 2)

rope and grapple (counts as 2)

dagger

Potion of Invisibility

Gem of Magic Resistance

Cloak of Protection



## STALKED BY A LIVING GARGOYLE!

High atop the shadowy walls of Castle Quarras, you, Derek Shadowwalker, master thief, make your way stealthily toward your destination—the Gemtower where the fabled Gem of Illystia is kept safe to cast its evil magic.

Suddenly you stop short. Looming just ahead of you in the darkness, perched like a vulture atop the castle wall, is a monstrous figure. Motionless and poised as if about to spring, its ugly fangs protrude from its gaping mouth. Long, wicked claws form the end of each finger, and a pair of huge wings billow batlike behind it.

You breathe a sigh of relief as you realize the figure is merely a stone statue—a gargoyle. As you move past the grinning statue, a savage blow smashes you from behind, sending you hurtling to the edge of the parapet. Turning quickly, you see that the hideous statue has come to life! Its vicious claws are smeared with your blood, and you know you are going to have to fight it.

### Can you defeat this fearsome creature?

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to 136. If it is less than 12, turn to 10.

Whatever the outcome, only your decisions, and the luck of the dice roll, can help as you try to  
**ESCAPE FROM CASTLE QUARRAS**

INVISIBILITY  
RING OF LIGHT  
SWORD

CONSISTENT FIGHTING  
SKILLS 7-10 REQUIRED

CONSISTENT AGILITY AND  
STEALTH REQUIRED 7-9

FOLLOW THE TUNNEL STRAIGHT  
BEWARE THE WIZARD  
DOUSING THE LIT TORCH AT THE  
BOTTOM OF THE TOWER KILLS THE  
WIZARD





**A SUPER ENDLESS QUEST™**  
**Adventure Gamebook #3**

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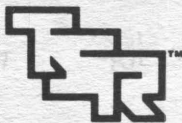
# **ESCAPE from CASTLE QUARRAS**

**BY DOUGLAS NILES**

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**Cover Art by Jeff Easley**  
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**TSR, Inc.**  
**PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™**

**To Allison,  
whose first word was "dice"**

**ESCAPE FROM CASTLE QUARRAS**

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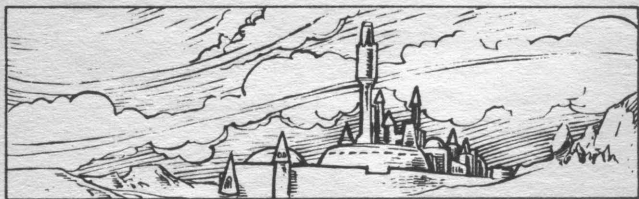
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## **AN EXCITING NEW EXPERIENCE IN BOOKS!**

Welcome, you who are about to explore the danger-filled depths of Castle Quarras, to an exciting, totally new concept in role-playing gamebooks.

Based on the popular DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games, SUPER ENDLESS QUEST™ Adventure Gamebooks require only two standard six-sided dice, an ample supply of luck—and, most of all, your skill in making decisions as you play the game. If dice are unavailable, a simple alternative, requiring only pencil and paper, may be used instead.

SUPER ENDLESS QUEST™ Adventure Gamebooks have been designed to read easily, without complicated rules to slow down the story. Once you have read through the simple rules that follow, you should seldom find it necessary to refer back to them. Your options are repeated clearly in the text at each choice point, with occasional reminders about additional options you may wish to consider to improve your chances. Your adventure reads like a book, plays like a game, and offers a thrill a minute—with YOU as the hero!

## YOUR CHARACTER

In this book, you are Derek Shadowalker, a retired Thief, even though you are still in the prime of life. Your successful career has earned you the undying gratitude of the less fortunate citizens of Quarras, but your name strikes fear in the hearts of dishonest merchants and slave traders.

Lately you have been leading a comparatively quiet life in your secluded villa just outside the city of Quarras, but you know all that can change in an instant if a worthwhile cause comes along. . . .



## PLAYING THE GAME

### ESTABLISHING YOUR CHARACTER

**YOUR** Derek Shadowalker will be different from someone else's because **YOU** help to create him.

Carefully tear out the removable **Character Stats Card** you will find at the beginning of this book. This card is your record of Derek Shadowalker's character makeup. It also doubles as a bookmark if you should need to mark your place to refer back to the rules.



Since we hope you will be playing this adventure many times, it is suggested that you write on the card in pencil only, so that your character stats can be erased easily when you are ready to play again. If you have access to a photocopier, you may wish to make several photocopies of the Character Stats Card before you fill it in. Another alternative is to reproduce the card by writing on a 3"x 5" card or a slip of paper.

You are now ready to round out Derek Shadow-walker's individual identity by establishing his strengths and weaknesses. Your name and character class have already been entered for you. Before you fill out the rest of the card, it is necessary for you to understand the game's scoring system.



## SCORING

Playing the game requires you to keep track of three things—**hit points**, **skill points**, and **experience points**—on the tear-out **Character Stats Card** located at the front of the book. An explanation of each of these follows.



## HIT POINTS

You, as Derek Shadowwalker, have a specific life strength, represented by **hit points**. Once hit points are reduced to zero, Derek Shadowwalker ceases to exist, and you have come to the end of your adventure, whether the text has come to an end or not.

You lose hit points each time you fail, through the roll of the dice, to hit your enemy, because your opponent succeeds in hitting you instead. As a result, you must deduct a stated number of hit points from your hit point total.

You may also lose hit points through sneak attacks or perhaps through carelessness when you have no chance to fight back. In such instances, you will either be told how much damage you received or you will be asked to roll one die for **damage**. The result of the die roll is deducted from your total hit points.

Derek Shadowwalker, as an experienced Thief, starts out the adventure with 20 hit points, plus one



random chance to improve this score. Roll one six-sided die and add the total to 20 for your total hit points. Record this number in the blank space labeled "hit points." If you roll 1, 2, 3, or 4 and are dissatisfied with the result, you have one additional chance to improve it. You may, if you wish, roll again, but you *must* accept the result of the second die roll, even if it is smaller than your first roll.

Guard Derek's hit points carefully, but don't be afraid to spend them when the goal seems worthwhile.



## SKILL POINTS

Now you are ready to determine your character's skills.

**Skill points** allow you to increase your chances of success by adding Derek Shadowwalker's score for a specific skill to the dice roll. In this book, you will be asked to divide 7 skill points in any way you want, provided that you give Derek at least 1 point in each of his three skills.

Derek Shadowwalker's skills in this book are **fighting, agility, and stealth.**



## **Fighting**

Your **fighting** skill score increases your chance of success in combat.

When you fight an opponent in this book, roll two dice and add the sum of the dice to your fighting skill score. If the total is equal to, or larger than, the number required to “hit” (given in the text), you are successful.

## **Agility**

Your **agility** skill score increases your chances of success in feats involving such things as nimbleness, dexterity, climbing, speed, and the like.

To use your agility skill, roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is equal to, or greater than, the number given in the text, you have succeeded.

## Stealth

Your **stealth** skill score encompasses all of your skills as a thief, including such talents as the ability to remain undetected, detect traps, pick locks, and so forth.

To use your stealth skill, roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, you are successful.

Unlike hit points, which may change during the adventure, skill points remain constant throughout the game. However, as you play and replay the adventure, you will want to experiment with different combinations of skill points to determine what works best.

You have 7 total skill points, which you may divide in any way you wish among Derek Shadowwalker's skill categories—**fighting**, **agility**, and **stealth**. The only exception is that you must place at least one skill point in each skill category. Now fill in the blanks for your three skills on the Character Stats Card. Remember, your placement of skill points can have a great effect on the outcome of your adventure, so choose wisely!





## EXPERIENCE POINTS

As in real life, experience increases your chances of success in a given situation because you have encountered a similar situation before and understand the various possibilities that may occur. You, as Derek Shadowalker, will begin this adventure with between 1 and 6 **experience points**, depending on the luck of your roll of the dice. You may spend them to increase your chances on *any* dice roll throughout the book, but once experience points are used up, they are gone and must be deducted from your total.

To use experience points, you must decide how many points you will spend *before* you roll the dice, then add that score to the result of your dice roll. Whether the roll of the dice is successful or not, the experience points are gone and must be deducted from your total.

To determine Derek Shadowalker's **experience points**, roll one six-sided die and record the result in the blank space marked "experience points" on the Character Stats Card. If you roll a 1 through 4, you have one, and only one, chance to improve your score by rolling a second time if you wish, but you *must* accept the second roll, even if it is smaller than the first. Remember, your experience points can be used on any dice roll to improve your chances, but once spent, they are used up and must be subtracted from your total experience points.

Choose when to use your experience points with care, saving them for crucial situations.



## COMBAT

**Combat** occurs when you choose, or are forced, to fight an enemy—a monster, a person, an undead creature. To engage in combat, roll two dice, add them together, and add Derek's fighting skill score to the result of the dice roll. The text will tell you how many points you need to hit the monster. The tougher the enemy, the more points you need to hit it. If the total is sufficient to hit the monster, turn to the "win" section. If you miss, the enemy automatically hits you instead, and you will be told how many hit points of damage to deduct from your score. Once your hit points are gone, you are dead, and you have come to the end of your adventure.

## **EQUIPMENT**

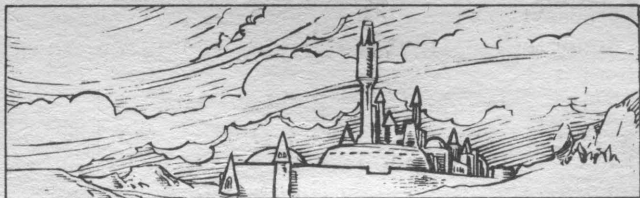
In this book, you will be offered a choice of what **equipment** to bring along with you on your adventure. You will be able to bring four items only. The equipment you select can have profound consequences on the success or failure of your quest, so give your selection careful thought.

The items you may choose from are listed on your Character Stats Card, but do not select them yet. You will be instructed when to do so at the appropriate point in the story. All the items may be used over and over again, with the exception of the Potion of Invisibility, which may be used only once.

## **PLAYING WITHOUT DICE**

Should you ever wish to play the adventure when dice are unavailable, there is a simple substitute that requires only pencil and paper. Simply write the numbers 1 through 6 on separate slips of paper and mix them up in a container. Then draw one of the slips, note the number, and place it back in the container. Mix up the numbers and draw a second time. Each draw represents one roll of the die. If only one die is called for, draw only one number.

Your character—Derek Shadowalker—is now complete, and you are ready to begin your adventure. Turn to page 15—and good luck!



1

Your soft leather boots pad soundlessly on the flagstones of the street as you stay alert, seeking any unusual sounds or sights. This back street lies in one of the city of Quarras's quieter districts, but nevertheless you have learned to move cautiously.

Your attention is suddenly attracted to a commotion ahead of you, and you slowly make your way to the next corner and peer around a crumbling stone building.

"Please! I have done nothing!"

You watch, horrified, as a man is dragged from his house by a pair of orcs. These hideous, pig-snouted monsters have recently become common in the ranks of the city guard.

"No! You mustn't . . ." screams a young woman, running from the house and tugging fruitlessly on the arm of one of the orcs. The brutish beast turns and shoves her to the ground before dragging the prisoner off toward a guard wagon.

Your fists clench in rage. Several burly orcs cast wary eyes up and down the street, watching for any sign of trouble. You realize it's hopeless to intervene.

Turning on your heel, filled with a surging sense of guilt, you resume your silent journey through the squalid city of Quarras. Incidents such as the one you

just observed occur all too frequently, and your sense of honor tells you that you should be doing something about it.

"Psst . . . Derek! Derek Shadowwalker!"

A voice from the shadows startles you back to attention. Whirling to face the source of the sound, you draw the slim dagger that is your only weapon.

"Well, well. Imagine, the famous Derek Shadowwalker surprised by me!" chuckles an old man, hobbling forward out of the shadows.

"Who are you?" you demand, suspicious of the old man's sudden appearance.

"Don't you remember me, boy?"

Finally the spark of recognition comes. "Pieter Kallouw! How are you? And Matrilla? Have you managed to stay out of trouble with the king?"

He chuckles once more, wheezing alarmingly until he regains his breath. "Yes, Derek. If you had not 'encountered' the taxman after he left with my life savings, I would not be here today."

You smile in acknowledgment of the old man's gratitude, warmed by the subtle praise. Helping the less fortunate citizens of Quarras survive the difficulties of the city has occupied much of your life up to now.

You are Derek Shadowwalker, Master Thief. You have survived a long and profitable career, earning a reputation as a benefactor of the poor and unfortunate peasants of Quarras. Among evil merchants and slave traders of Quarras's teeming Silver Plaza, however, you are among the most feared enemies of society.

Now you have retired. Still healthy and relatively young, you finally have time to enjoy the fruits of your work. Living in a secluded villa several miles from the castle, you live a peaceful and relaxed life.

The old man seems tired, but the light of wisdom



still sparkles brightly in his eyes. His voice grows serious, however.

"Times have grown very bad, have they not?" he inquires, stating the obvious.

"Aye," you agree. "I fear the king has forgotten the legacy of his family."

"Perhaps his memory has been stolen from him," suggests Pieter.

You look at him in surprise. "Surely you jest, Pieter. How can a memory be stolen from a man?"

"You have heard of the Gem of Illystia?" asks the old man. As you nod, he continues. "That infamous stone is said to have great and evil powers."

His eyes take on a faraway look as he continues, remembering. "When the king returned from his quest for the fabled gem, he was accompanied by the vile sorcerer, Kharseron. Shortly after his return, the cruel laws that oppress us were enacted."

"You're suggesting that the gem is somehow connected with the king's sudden change from benefactor to tyrant?" you ask. "But how could a stone have such an impact on a man?"

"By the power of magic!" Pieter's voice quavers with urgency. "Kharseron, the sorcerer, uses the power of the gem to speak to the king's inner self. Through the evil stone, it is really Kharseron who rules Quarras!

"The king languishes under the spell of the gem. Kharseron uses the power of the stone to corrupt our leader, turning him in ways unnatural and dark.

"You can choose not to believe, Derek Shadowalker, but you know that I speak the truth," he concludes simply.

Despite Pieter's fantastic story, you realize that you do believe him. Strong evidence helps to persuade you. In the past year, Quarras's monarch, King

Kerral, has grown suddenly oppressive and cruel. His punishments strike the innocent as well as the guilty. Taxes climb steadily, and hundreds of citizens suffer in the dark dungeons beneath mighty Castle Quarras. Fear has crept into the streets and fields of Quarras.

A decade ago, King Kerral assumed the throne. His fame as a just and kind leader spread quickly. Quarras became known as a kingdom where peace and justice reigned supreme, primarily because of the steady guiding hand of the wise king.

A little more than a year ago, the king returned from an expedition to the Frozen Glacier of Izen-thrall, accompanied by a gaunt, yellowed figure of a man. This mysterious stranger was briefly introduced to the people of Quarras as the king's new adviser, Kharseron.

Kharseron took up residence in the royal castle, and since then has never ventured outside the fortress's imposing walls. Rumor has it that Kharseron's words carry undue weight in the ears of the king. Much of the evil that has fallen upon the kingdom has been attributed to the sorcerous manipulations of the king's mysterious adviser. Of course, these rumors travel only among close friends. Those who criticize the adviser in public generally vanish in the dark of night, never to be seen on the streets of Quarras again.

All this reflection leads you back to the old man and his mission.

"This gem . . ." you ask slowly, "it is the tool that Kharseron uses to hold the king in thrall?"

The old man nods, and your thoughts turn to the fabled Gem of Illystia, as the stone is commonly called. The objective of the king's expedition to Izen-thrall, the jewel is of untold worth. As huge as a

man's fist, it glows with a light from within, and those who see it remember the sight for the rest of their lives.

Or so you have heard. You have never seen the stone itself. Very few have. It is kept locked in the top room of Castle Quarras's highest tower. On a dark night, an unearthly blue radiance spills from the narrow windows of the tower, and people feel an unearthly chill in the air.

"And you," the old man continues, his eyes searching yours, "are the only man in Quarras who can steal the Gem of Illystia from the tower and lift the yoke of oppression from the people."

*So that's it!* you think with a start. You know that you are the best thief in Quarras, yet the challenge of stealing the gem is of awesome proportions. Castle Quarras is surrounded by an outer wall, a deep moat, and an inner wall. Within those confines, a maze of corridors, courtyards, additional walls, and buildings sprawl. The Gemtower is in the very center of the castle complex.

On the other hand, the rewards of success would be great. The lot of the peasants of Quarras has worsened drastically in the past year. If you were to free the king from this evil curse, thousands would benefit. You know also that the gem is worth a large sum of gold. Your professional acquaintances include a number of dealers who might be interested in such a treasure.

"I'll do it!" you hear yourself saying.

The old man grins, as if he knew all along what your answer would be, then speaks again: "I have studied the castle. I know of a couple of routes by which a skilled thief might enter undetected. There is a storm grate that runs beneath the moat. It would lead you within the inner wall. The stones holding

the grate in place are loose, and you could remove it easily.

"I also know of a dark area along a high point in the castle wall where you could scale the battlements undetected, since the guards are certain that no man could possibly climb that section of the wall. It's located in one of the few sections unprotected by the moat.

"All Quarras will owe you a debt of gratitude if you should succeed! But please," he adds, "be careful."

You must consider how to enter the castle. Should you try to crawl through the storm grate under the moat? Or should you attempt to scale the high, unprotected section of wall?

And once you have made this decision, you must choose the equipment you will take with you. You have a number of items that have proved useful on other adventures, but you know you can't afford to carry them all.

Experience has shown that you can take four of these items without obstructing your abilities. You must choose from the following:

- A sword and scabbard (counts as two items) - FOR INSIDE
- A Potion of Invisibility
- A rope and grapple (counts as two items) - FOR OUTSIDE
- A dagger
- A Gem of Magic Resistance (which allows you to resist poisons and certain types of magic)
- A Cloak of Protection (which serves as a light suit of armor)

Remember, you can take only four of these things. The sword and rope each count as two of the four things, since they are bulky and difficult to sneak around with.

Once you have selected your equipment and chosen a plan to enter the castle, turn to the number of the section you want. Note the equipment you're carrying on the Character Stats Card.

You decide to make your attempt this very night, waiting only for the full protection of darkness.

"I wish you the best of luck," calls the old man as you start down the street, lost in thought. "I know that I have come to the right man!"

You consider the two avenues of approach the old man spoke of: the storm grate leading under the moat, or the high, unguarded wall. Neither seems beyond your abilities, but which offers the best chance of success? If you decide to go in through the storm grate, turn to **78**. If you want to go over the castle wall, turn to **48**.



**2**

Your fist lashes out, but some form of brutish intuition seems to warn the ogre of your attack. Its brawny arm flies up instinctively, deflecting your invisible punch.

The ogre flails out in rage at your head. The blow connects and sends your head smashing hard into the wall behind you. Then everything goes black for a few seconds.

When you come to your senses, you find yourself surrounded by suspicious guards. They jerk you roughly to your feet, and you see that you have been disarmed, with your hands bound securely behind



you. What's more, you are now fully visible again.

The guards say nothing to you, but they turn and pull you firmly towards a tall, looming structure—a building you recognize as the Great Hall of Castle Quarras. Turn to 16.

### 3

Kicking hard with both legs, you propel yourself through the water toward the reptile. The giant crocodile rushes toward you, its mouth gaping and its monstrous tail flailing huge waves in the water.

You see one cold, reptilian eye staring impassionately at you. You know it is perhaps the only vulnerable spot in the beast's scaly body.

Your sword drives straight and true, striking the monster a painful wound directly in its unprotected eye. With a bellow, the monstrous crocodile lunges backward and dives under the water.

Hoping that it has submerged for protection rather than to prepare for another attack, you turn and swim for the far shore. You recall a series of storm grates there, leading from the moat into the city.

Halfway to the shore, you hear with dismay a thrashing sound off to your left. Obviously another crocodile is seeking an easy meal.

You see as the reptile approaches that it is not as large as the one you sent to the bottom. It seems much faster, however.

Rushing at you in a roaring froth of water, the crocodile opens its mouth wide, expecting easy prey. You hope you might have a chance to repeat your attack on the monster's one weak spot.

You know it will require perfect timing, and the crocodile is closing the distance between you quickly. At the last moment, you kick to the side and slash out with your sword. At the same instant, the croc



attempts to close its fearsome jaws over your torso.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **74**. If it is 10 or less, turn to **121**.

#### 4

Your fingertips throb from the pain of supporting your entire body, but somehow you manage to keep hold just long enough for your other hand to find a hold. In a moment, you are past the tricky section of the wall and have arrived at the security of the window ledge.

The pane of glass over the window glows icy blue. You feel an unnatural chill in the air. Unfortunately, the window is too heavily clouded for you to see into the room.

Looking up, however, you see that climbing the last few feet to reach the top of the tower would be risky. The parapet juts outward in a treacherous overhang, some one hundred feet over the courtyard below.

You know that you cannot remain on this ledge forever, so you must decide. Do you want to break in the window and alert whoever, or whatever, might lie within the room of your arrival, or do you dare attempt the climb up to the parapet on top of the tower?

If you want to smash the window, turn to **99**. If you would rather attempt to climb to the parapet, turn to **116**.



You spring like a rocket from the window into the black night, both hands grasping upward for the handhold that might save your life.

Behind you, the ice monster lunges into the niche after you, splintering what remains of the glass in a vain effort to reach you.

Your hands strike stone at the very peak of your leap, and instantly your fingers close over the cold, hard parapet of the Gemtower. Precariously you swing back and forth as you hear the monster bellow in frustration below.

Twisting your head around, you see the horrible form in the window writhe in mindless savagery, making a berserk effort to reach you. Its fearsome maw draws close to your hanging feet, and you pull to lift yourself beyond the monster's reach.

But the ice creature has leaned too far. With a final lunge, it teeters once and topples from the window ledge, spinning slowly through the air until it smashes into myriads of shining crystals on the stones of the plaza below.

Elation gives you the strength to hoist yourself onto the parapet and quickly scramble to the security of the wide platform there. Already the air seems warmer! Turn to 83.

The gargoyle swiftly charges in for another attack, just as you realize that you have neglected to bring any weapon along with you. Stony claws clutch each of your shoulders before you can twist out of the way.

With a powerful toss, the monster throws you bodily over the parapet. The last thing you see are the hard paving stones of the courtyard as they zoom up to meet you. . . .

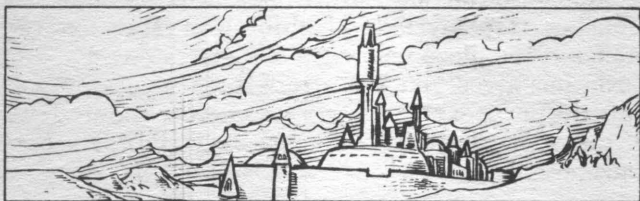
## 7

Looking around carefully for the first time, you strain your eyes to penetrate the darkness, but you see no glimmer of light. You begin to grope with your hands.

Feeling along the walls, you find yourself in a small, square room. The only other exit seems to be blocked by a heavy portcullis, or heavy iron gate. Concluding that you will have to leave by the door you entered, you turn back in that direction.

Suddenly the floor beneath you falls away! You leap out toward where you think the portcullis is, flinging your body through space as you sense a black pit yawning beneath you. Groping in the darkness, you attempt to catch hold of the bars before you drop into the darkness below.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **162**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **88**.



## 8

Your desperate leap falls short of the iron gate, and you plummet through the trapdoors into the darkness below. A moment later, you crash heavily into a hard, stone floor.

Subtract 4 points of damage from your total hit points.

Climbing groggily to your feet, you lean against a



damp stone wall, groaning in pain. Whatever thoughts of escape you had have been replaced by the simple need to survive.

Looking around slowly, you try to figure out what to do next. Turn to 134.

9

You find yourself in a situation where you desperately need your sword, or even your dagger, yet like a fool you decided to leave them behind. The ogre steps forward, peering into the darkness suspiciously.

"Who there?" it calls again.

Some of the guards in the courtyard are beginning to move in this direction now, but the monster before you still blocks the doorway . . . or does it?

As you look closely, you see that the huge ogre has now taken several steps forward. A gap of a foot or so separates it from the doorframe.

You have an audacious idea, but are you stealthy enough to pull it off? Even aided by invisibility, the chances of sneaking past the guard unnoticed are slim. But then again, much of your reputation as a thief rests on your ability to do audacious things.

Smiling grimly, you edge carefully around the guard until you are pressing your back to the wall outside of the doorframe. Ever so carefully, you start to move past the ogre.

*Whew!* you think as you catch a noseful of the guard's strong odor. *What barnyard did this oaf come from?*

Suddenly you cringe as you hear a faint squeak from your still damp boots. Apparently the ogre didn't notice, but neither does it move any farther from the doorway.

Now you are halfway into the opening. Although you cannot see yourself, you are certain that your

chest is less than a half inch from the monster's brawny arm.

Roll one die and add your stealth skill score to the result. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **177**. If it is less than 6, turn to **49**.

## 10

The grotesque monster twists at the last minute, and your blade bounces harmlessly off its flank. But the ferocity of the gargoyle's attack sends you sprawling along the top of the narrow wall.

Subtract 4 hit points of damage—3 if you have the Cloak of Protection.

Recovering your balance quickly, you again face the gargoyle's attack. You see another opening, and your blade whips into a lightning slash!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 2 if you have a sword. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **136**. If it is 11 or less, repeat this section.



## 11

You judge the dark shadows of the niche to be more secure than a swordfight with a trained assassin, especially with the mysterious and very powerful wizard Kharseron nearby. Melting backward, you disappear into the darkness.

In a moment the assassin pulls aside the tapestry. You are dismayed as torchlight spills into the niche,

but you reassure yourself that the light would still seem dim to anyone coming from a well-lighted room.

The assassin slinks through the opening and lets the tapestry fall back into place. You can barely make out the outline of his form as he reaches for the door.

And then he freezes.

A chill runs down your spine as you wonder what could have caused him to hesitate. Suddenly you remember something. When you entered this niche, you forgot to close the door!

You and the assassin explode into action simultaneously. Your slender blade whips forward like lightning, but the assassin is still too quick! Rolling backward like an acrobat, he tumbles into the tapestry as your sword slices through empty air.

In a moment, the slippery killer leaps to his feet, throws off the enveloping tapestry, and confronts you with a wickedly curved dagger, almost as long as a short sword.

Your own blade extended, you move forward from the niche. Neither of you gets the advantage of surprise, and you both study your opponent.

The assassin, you know from the red patch on his headband, is a Master Slayer. But your keen blade, and the steady hand at its hilt, make him pause. Warily he circles, looking for an opening. He feints a thrust and you deflect it deftly. Your counterthrust is likewise parried.

Now the fight takes on a deadly serious aspect, as the assassin lunges forward with a murderous swipe. You spring back, at the same slicing a thin red line in his cheek.

As his long dagger whistles past your face, you notice for the first time a clear, gummy substance on the blade. His weapon is poisoned!

Roll one die and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **201**. If it is 10 or less, turn to **111**.

## 12

The keen steel of the guard's sword whistles through the air as it passes over your head. You'll probably be missing a few locks of your hair, but your scalp escapes injury by a fraction of an inch.

Raising your own weapon high, you plunge it into the flesh of your adversary, who collapses with a moan.

Pausing for an instant, you listen for any sound of alarm that the combat might have raised but hear nothing. Turn to **166**.

## 13

*Click!*

With that soft sound, you feel the lock on the door give way to your deft touch. Carefully you replace your tools in the case, listening for any sound from beyond the door but hearing nothing.

Inch by inch, you push the massive portal open. Much to your relief, it pivots silently on well-oiled hinges. You see no light beyond the door, but as it opens you begin to make out a muffled conversation.

As the door opens, you see that it leads into a dark niche. A heavy tapestry covers the far end, but you see torchlight around the edges of the fabric.

From the sound of the voices, you guess that there are two people talking in the room beyond the tapestry. They speak in hushed tones, as if they don't want to be overheard. You move closer to the tapestry, intending to do just that.

"The gem's work is nearly done!" gloats someone in a wheezing voice.





"And soon the kingdom will be yours!" agrees the second voice, which reminds you of a puppy trying to please its master.

"Tomorrow at dawn, my faithful Phyllo, you will drive this poisoned dagger between the king's ribs!" continues the first voice.

Hardly daring to breathe for fear of giving yourself away, you notice a little pinhole of torchlight flickering through the fabric of the curtain. Carefully you move your eye to the hole.

"Your wish is my command, master," the one called Phyllo is saying. He reminds you of a crouching weasel as he eagerly fingers a bag at his side that jingles noisily. Wrapped around his head you see the black band of the Assassin's Guild.

The other figure towers over his partner, and even his billowing black robe is unable to hide the gauntness of his body. He turns, lost in thought, and you see the sinister face of Kharseron, the king's wizard!

"Take care that you are not seen as you leave!" orders the evil wizard, then turns on his heel and stalks from the room.

Phyllo looks around surreptitiously before starting toward the very tapestry that conceals you! You realize that in a moment, he will pull it aside.

Quickly you glance around. The niche you occupy is deep and dark. You would stand a fair chance of concealing yourself in the shadows to either side. Yet, if you were discovered in such a dead end, you would have to fight at a serious disadvantage.

Your other option is to attack the oily assassin while you have the advantage of surprise, trying to silence him before he has a chance to summon help.

And you must decide now, for he is right outside the curtain! If you want to attack the assassin, turn to 36. If you want to try to hide, turn to 11.

Your foot is nearly clear of the dog and you are ready to breathe a sigh of relief, when the monstrous animal suddenly decides to roll over! With a soft rustle of straw, it rolls into your unbalanced legs and brings you down on top of it.

In a horrifying chorus of growls, snarls, and curses, the two of you untangle yourselves and spring to your feet. The dog looks even larger standing up. It has obviously been placed here because of its vile disposition.

These observations have only a moment to register before the dog leaps for your throat. Its powerful body rockets toward you, but you are just quick enough to duck out of the way.

The dog turns and regards you threateningly. Low growls rumble from its cavernous chest. It approaches you more cautiously now, but you can see that it intends to press the attack again.

Your blade held out before you, you back toward the sanctuary of the corridor and its heavy wooden door. The dog follows, hackles raised and teeth bared.

Suddenly it leaps again. Obviously the dog is no stranger to swordsmen, since it easily dodges to the side of your first hasty thrust. As it closes in, you have one more chance to strike before those fearsome teeth clamp into your body!

Roll two dice. Add your fighting skill score to the result, plus 1 additional point if you are carrying a sword. If the total is 10 or more, turn to 141. If it is 9 or less, turn to 97.

Whew! For a moment, you nearly panic, certain that the wizard must be aware of your presence. The moment passes quickly, however, and Khar-

seron moves to a trapdoor set in the platform atop the Gemtower. He lifts the hatch, and chill blue light spills from the room below.

The sorcerer turns away from you and begins to descend a ladder leading down into the tower. If you wish, you might be able to attack him by surprise before he could cast a spell—which would almost certainly be the end of you. After all, one of the objectives of your mission is to free the king from the thrall of this fiendish wizard.

Yet Kharseron's powers are legendary, and you are not certain that you could destroy him. You're not certain that you want to take this opportunity to find out.

If you wish to attack the wizard from behind, turn to 123. If you decide to wait to see what happens, turn to 58.



16

The huge doors of the Great Hall swing outward ponderously as you approach, escorted by the silent guards. The boots of your party echo hollowly on the stone floor of the palace as you pass through a long, high corridor.

Finally you are marched into an audience chamber, a room normally reserved for the king alone. With a shock, however, you realize you must be staring at the incredibly gaunt, sinister form of the evil

sorcerer Kharseron hunched like a vulture on the tall throne.

His yellowed skin reminds you of the cold belly of a snake. Evil, glittering little eyes carefully follow your advance as the guards shove you forward.

"The king has entrusted all audiences to me!" he rasps in a voice that sends chills down your spine. Then he turns toward the guards. "Why have you brought this man here?"

Quickly one of the guards relates the story of your discovery and capture. The sorcerer studies you carefully as he listens to the story, his black eyes glittering evilly.

"A mere thief," he finally declares. "Let him ponder the error of his ways in the king's dungeon!"

The wizard's pronouncement rings in your ears as the guards whisk you away. You pass through a bewildering series of iron doors, the far side of each, it seems, just a little darker than before.

At last you stop before a small, black door. Rusty hinges creak as the guards jerk it open, and a waft of stale, dead air assaults your nostrils as you are pushed inside.

Your nose scrapes the chill stones of the floor as you trip in the inky darkness. With mounting dread, you suspect that you have just entered the chamber in which you will spend the rest of your life.

17

Once again the icy floor betrays you as you make your thrust. Although the end of your blade chips into the monster's near side, it does no serious damage.

Moving amazingly fast, the creature lunges toward you, its mouth gaping. You know you can't dodge the blow in time and wince in anticipation.

Scant inches from your chest, the blob stops. Before you can react, a whoosh of frigid air erupts from the aperture in the thing's face, hurling you off your feet and momentarily knocking you senseless as you fly into the icy wall.

If you do not have the Gem of Magic Resistance, subtract 5 points of damage from your total hit points. Subtract only 3 points if you have the gem.

In an effort to recover your wits, you roll to the side and spring to your feet. Once again the monster slides toward you, and again you raise your weapon to renew the desperate fight for your life.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if you are using a sword. If the result is 11 or more, turn to 110. If it is 10 or less, repeat this section.

## 18

You decide you can't afford to let a second opportunity pass. You take a deep breath and hurl yourself through the trapdoor toward Kharseron's back.

Alerted by the sound of your approach, the wizard turns and leaps aside from your driving blade. The force of your dive sends both of you sprawling.

Quickly you regain your feet, then almost fall again on the slippery floor. You close in for another attack while the wizard begins a chant that you know will result in a terrible spell!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 8 or less, turn to 92. If it is 9 or more, turn to 34.

## 19

With a desperate lunge to one side, you narrowly evade the thrusting swords of the two guards. Carried forward by the momentum of their attack, they

both go down like tenpins as you roll into their legs.

"Curse it!" bellows one guard as his comrade lands on top of him.

"Look out, you oaf!" roars the other.

Springing to your feet behind them, you see that your path to the ditch lies open before you now. In seconds you are leaping over the rim and sliding down the muddy bank.

The guards above are still trying to sort themselves out as you disappear into the tunnel leading back under the wall.

Your heart pounding, you race through the dank, dark tunnel. Gradually the sounds of pursuit fade into the distance.

By daybreak, you are safely home, exhausted from your narrow escape. Your mission to Castle Quarras will have to wait for another night, but you have been well warned of the dangers that lie in your path.



20

You decide to follow the path taken by the wizard and start down the corridor to the left. Immediately after entering it, you notice the fine draperies over the walls and the polished wooden planks on the floor. This is luxury!

Bright yellow lanterns, burning expensive oil,



hang high on the walls every twenty feet or so. The high, arched ceiling towers at least twenty feet high in the center.

But one thing that bothers you is that there is no cover. If someone should come along, you would almost certainly be discovered, and the prospect doesn't appeal to you.

Some distance ahead, the billowing shape of the wizard's robe precedes you around each twist and turn as you make your way through the mazelike hallways of the castle. It's difficult trying to stay out of sight because you must move swiftly to each corner the wizard turns before Kharseron disappears around another bend.

You can't allow these concerns to interfere with your mission, however, so you carefully continue to follow the wizard. At least the long corridors allow you to remain well behind him.

Abruptly you make a turn that you saw the wizard make, but you see no sign of him before you. Hurrying as much as you dare, you turn around another corner and see Kharseron, lost in thought, only about forty feet away.

Carefully you try to slide back into the shadows and wait for him to move on.

Roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. Add 2 to the result if you brought your Gem of Magic Resistance. If the total is 6 or less, turn to 182. If it is 7 or more, turn to 98.

## 21

After you are led down the corridor for some time, the guards push you through a large doorway into some kind of waiting room. Two of them remain to guard you while the others leave to make some kind of report.

The guards with you seem bored and inattentive, giving you a chance to work on your bonds. In a few minutes, you feel the ropes loosen enough to work your hands free.

Surreptitiously you look around. Neither guard is paying much attention to you. The door you entered through is closed, but you see no sign of a lock. Should you make a break for it?

If you want to try to escape, turn to **93**. If you decide to stay and see what happens, turn to **185**.

## 22

Once again your blade flashes straight to its target, cutting another great chunk of jagged ice from the fearsome monster's body. At the same time, however, the creature's frightful head spews a blast of frigidly cold air into your side, almost knocking you from your feet.

Reeling, you slip and fall heavily to the floor, but the monster is reacting to its own wound, writhing backward and failing to take advantage of your vulnerability.

If you brought the Gem of Magic Resistance, deduct 2 hit points of damage. If you do not have the gem, subtract 4 hit points.

Quickly you leap to your feet and prepare to attack. The monster, although seriously wounded, still shows plenty of fight as its head rears back and it prepares to loose another icy blast.

This time you take the initiative, however. The monster is slow to drop its head, and your blade flies toward the steaming gouge you have already carved in its icy body.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if you are using a sword. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **167**. If it is 9 or less, turn to **72**.

## 23

Quickly you duck into a narrow niche between two buildings. The shadows should cloak you well in the dark depression.

Unfortunately, they also cloak a step up from the street. Sprawling headlong as you trip over the unseen obstacle, you fall loudly onto a wooden platform.

"What's that?"

"It came from over there!"

You hear the guards shouting to each other, and it's obvious that you have been discovered. Scrambling to your feet, you move deeper into the niche.

Before you have taken four steps, however, you smash your face into a stone wall and reel backward unsteadily. Before you can recover your senses, you have been grabbed by several burly guards.

Swiftly your hands are tied behind your back, and two guards drag you along, one holding each arm. Soon the clanking gates of Castle Quarras open before you, although this was hardly the entrance you had in mind.

You are dragged roughly through several large courtyards, until finally the hugest building you have ever seen towers before you.

You know that you are being taken to the Great Hall of Castle Quarras.

Turn to 16.

## 24

Your thrust carries past the guard's defenses, and he pays the supreme penalty for his mistake, collapsing to the ground with a low moan.

The other guard backs away, casting about with his sword. Your blood-stained blade moves to counter. Unfortunately the blood reveals your position.

"I see him!" shouts the swordsman.

Immediately guards begin to converge on the scene. In seconds, you will be completely surrounded. You have only a moment to react, but that is all the time you need.

Leaping at the guard, you make a blazing series of slashes with your blade. Obviously having difficulty seeing you, the guard retreats. Finally you see an opening, and your blade slashes forward!

If you succeed, the path of your escape is clear! Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if you are using your sword. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **39**. If it is less than 10, turn to **85**.

## 25

You decide to follow the watery tunnel to your right. After a dozen feet or so, the water is up to your waist, but it doesn't seem to be getting any deeper.

This passage is narrower than the one you just left, and the ceiling is much lower. Although the water never gets more than about three feet deep, you find you need to crouch down in it just to avoid the rotted timber beams sagging beneath the moldy ceiling.

Soon you leave behind all traces of the moonlight from the grate behind you. Following the tunnel walls with your hands, you slosh straight ahead.

Abruptly the walls on both sides of the tunnel end. Apparently branching corridors lead both to the right and left. A cautious search straight ahead shows that your corridor continues after about a four-foot gap. Deciding to go straight ahead, you pass several other corridors branching off to the sides, always to the right and left, exactly opposite each other.

The tunnel seems to slope upward slightly, for the water is only knee deep now. Finally you see light before you. With relief, you move into a large cham-

ber lighted dimly by moonlight streaming through a grate some twenty feet overhead.

Looking around, you try to solve the riddle of the branching corridors. You notice that several pairs of them lead out from this large chamber. A quick examination shows that each is a niche only four or five feet deep.

Then you see something that makes your blood run cold. Staring out at you from a narrow niche is a grinning skull!



Momentarily startled, you jump backward and look around nervously, noticing for the first time that each niche contains some moldy bones. Obviously you have discovered some sort of graveyard. While you are not superstitious, you feel uneasy in this grim, dank tomb.

Suddenly you hear a splash behind you. . . . Turn to 37.

Once again your keen blade penetrates the scaly hide of the gargoyle. The creature falls back quickly, tumbling onto its back. It thrashes about for a moment, struggling weakly to get up, and then lies still.

You stand wearily beside the monster, your heart pounding and lungs heaving from the exertion of the savage fight.

And then you hear another menacing sound! Heavy footsteps in the courtyard below announce the presence of several armed men.

Dropping onto your stomach, you lie in the shadows and hope that the guards were not alerted by the sounds of your battle with the gargoyle.

Much to your relief, the guards move on, away from the scene of combat. Apparently they are merely in the midst of a routine patrol.

Turn to 197.

Your full weight hangs from your fingertips as you try to lift yourself the last few inches to find another handhold.

The fatigue of the long night, coupled with the pain and exhaustion from your wounds, prove too much to overcome.

You feel your fingers break free one by one, and you topple from the wall. Derek Shadowalker, master thief of Quarras, has begun his last journey. . . .

You decide to freeze in your tracks and wait for the right opportunity to get across the courtyard unnoticed. Once you make it to the shadows of the buildings, you should be safe.



The two guards who discovered your tracks have paused, confused, several dozen yards away. They confer in hushed tones and peer around the darkened area in puzzlement.

"Hey, men!" one of the trackers shouts suddenly. "We've found some tracks!"

"Fan out and head this way!" adds the other. "There's something funny going on here!"

Quickly the group of soldiers standing around the fire spreads out and begins to cross the courtyard. You see with relief that they should pass you some distance away.

As the guards congregate around the two who discovered your tracks, you turn and slip toward the buildings at the far side of the courtyard.

You make it to the shadows and breathe a sigh of relief. Several large wooden doors stand before you, none of which shows any visible sign of a lock.

Since the doors look nearly identical, you decide to open the closest one and duck inside. You stop outside the door and look around cautiously. The guards are still studying your muddy footprints intently, but they haven't moved out to search the courtyard.

Just as you turn to try the door, however, it swings outward suddenly and smashes you full in the face. Stumbling backward, clutching your nose in pain, you see a huge ogre, dressed in the uniform of the king's guard, emerge.

"Who there?" it grunts, hearing you but seeing nothing.

The ogre's wide-set, bloodshot eyes peer wickedly about, and its broad snout flares in displeasure. Even in the dim light, its sharp tusks seem to glitter with a sinister light.

The ogre completely blocks the doorway, and its suspicions have been aroused. You notice that

already some of the guards in the courtyard are looking this way. You wonder if you could surprise the monster and perhaps immobilize it long enough to dart into the building.

"What's going on?" one of the guards in the courtyard calls. It's obvious that you don't have much time.

If you have a weapon and want to take the ogre by surprise, turn to **125**. If you don't have a weapon but still want to try to get past the orge, turn to **9**. If you decide to slip away and avoid an encounter altogether here, turn to **163**.



**29**

As you thrust your blade toward the zombie's horrible face, your foot slips in the mud coating the floor beneath the inky water. Falling forward, you see your blade slice empty air as the zombie turns out of the way.

At the same time, you feel a burning pain in your back. You turn to see the other zombie pulling back its bloody claw.

Deduct 3 points of damage from your hit point total, or 2 points if you have the Cloak of Protection.

Quickly you turn to face both monsters, the loss of blood making you feel too weak to continue the battle. You know that you have no choice in the matter,

however, so you brace yourself to meet another attack.

Again the zombies repeat their pattern, spreading out to the sides and trying to take you from two directions. And again you will have to rely on speed—and luck—to stop one of the monsters before the other can strike you.

You try to plant your feet carefully this time, but you know that the muck on the floor of this forlorn chamber is too slippery to count on. All you can do is hope for the best and make your attack.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 9 or less, repeat this section. If it is 10 or more, turn to 174.

### 30

Cursing your lack of foresight, you realize how important the rope and grapple are to a climb up this high a wall. Discouraged, you try to evaluate your options.

Of course, you could always change your mind and try the storm grate on the other side of the castle. Or you could return home to get the climbing equipment, but this would cost you valuable time.

You study the wall again, as if seeking inspiration, and you notice that the face is covered with a network of cracks and gouges. While it won't be an easy climb, it seems possible that you could find enough handholds to climb to the top without your rope.

Of course, such a climb offers tremendous risks. A fall from anywhere near the top would almost certainly prove fatal. But the night continues to pass, and you can gain nothing by delaying your decision. What will it be?

If you choose to head back home to get the rope and grapple, turn to 77. If you decide to go around to the

storm grate and enter the castle there, turn to **195**. If you elect to climb the wall without the protection of your rope and grapple, turn to **90**.



**31**

You slip quickly along the base of the wall, anxious to duck out of sight into a corridor before one of the guards looks in your direction. Suddenly you crash into something and sprawl headlong on the ground.

Clanging and crashing, an entire rack of blacksmith's tools spills on its side beneath you. Cursing your clumsiness, you leap to your feet as the two guards rush toward you shouting an alarm.

You see several swords lying on the ground, apparently fallen from the rack. You can draw your own, or if you didn't bring it, you can snatch one up from the ground. In any event, it looks as though you are going to have to fight.

"Hey, you!" one of the guards shouts. "Stay right where you are!"

The other guard leaps toward you with sword drawn, then pauses a few feet away. Already you hear shouts from other parts of the castle. Your mind races. Would it be wiser to surrender now, rather than face odds so heavily stacked against you?

If you decide to fight, turn to **87**. If you think that you should surrender, turn to **145**.

### 32

You turn and head back toward the storm grate, staggering drunkenly. The mire clutches at your feet and the lack of air is making you gag.

Roll one six-sided die. Add 2 to the result if you are carrying the Gem of Magic Resistance. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **109**. If it is 4 or less, turn to **95**.

### 33

Grasping your sword firmly, you think about this new state of affairs. Twelve feet or so above you, the trapdoor offers no hope of exit. Your only alternative, then, seems to be to explore the lower level.

Running one hand along the wall, you start to walk down the dark corridor. You almost lose your balance as you quickly come to a long stairway leading even farther underground.

Just before you start to descend, you hear a muffled scraping sound above you, followed by an abrupt click. You realize that some mysterious mechanism has just closed the trapdoor.

Proceeding cautiously down the stairs, you count twelve steps before you again set foot on a level surface. Pools of stagnant water occur frequently on the floor here, and you get the feeling that you are passing through a tunnel that is far underground.

Perhaps an hour goes by as you stumble blindly through the tunnel. You soon discover that you are walking through a veritable maze of connecting tunnels and stairways. You can only hope that you are not merely retracing your previous route, but you have no way of knowing. Turn to **108**.

### 34

Your blade lashes forward and catches the evil wizard squarely in the chest. Although you feel no

armor, the tip of the weapon merely bounces off him as if he were clad in plate mail.

Nonetheless, the force of your thrust seems to have stunned the mage, and he shakes his head groggily. The spell he was attempting to cast has obviously been wasted.

Following up your advantage, you close in for still another attack. The wizard recovers quickly and begins to cast another spell.

Can you stop him?

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 8 or less, turn to **92**. If it is 9 or more, turn to **176**.

### **35**

Less than an inch separates your fingertips from the top of the wall, but that inch is the difference between success and failure. Helplessly you tumble back to the ground.

By the time you can get to your feet, you find yourself surrounded by a ring of steel held by guards who have just discovered their bleeding comrades.

"I surrender," you say weakly, holding up your hands.

Roughly the guards grab and bind your hands behind your back. In moments, they are pushing you toward the Great Hall of Castle Quarras. Turn to **16**.

### **36**

The assassin's hand reaches out to pull the tapestry aside, but you beat him to it. Tearing the fabric aside, you lunge toward him with outthrust sword.

But in a flash, the assassin pulls out a wicked, curved dagger and deflects your blade. Like lightning, he rushes in to counterattack, and you just manage to parry the keen blade.



As the assassin quickly recovers his balance, you notice an oily substance gleaming on the tip of his blade. The same poisoned dagger intended for the king might be used instead on you!

Your initial attack carried you away from the niche. Now the two of you square off in the center of the room, circling each other warily. You notice that the assassin shows considerable skill with his dagger. Doubtless he has used it many times before.

The assassin's skill might lead to his undoing, however. He is so sure of himself that he fails to call out to the wizard to come to his aid. Obviously he doesn't want his presence in the castle to become public knowledge.

Feigning clumsiness, you let him slowly back you across the room. Finally you feel the cold stone wall behind you. At the same instant, the assassin renews his attack with arrogant carelessness.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **201**. If it is 9 or less, turn to **111**.

### **37**

Whirling quickly, you scan the dim cavern, seeking the source of the splashing sound. Your blood runs like icewater through your veins as your mind imagines the horrors that might be skulking through this tomb.

And then you see it! A vaguely human face, atop a stooped, shuffling body, is advancing toward you out of the darkness. As the figure moves into the moonlight, you see two similar forms, one on each side of the first.

Zombies! You know that you are facing the animated bodies of dead men, and their unnatural presence here almost causes you to turn and run like a



frightened child. Steeling yourself for a grim battle, you reach for the hilt of your sword.

But did you bring it? Or must you face these creatures with only your dagger, or, even worse, completely unarmed?

The zombies, their lifeless hands clutching eerily toward you, continue to advance and begin to spread out. You know that you face a terrible fight!

If you have no weapon, turn to **190**. If you must fight these undead monsters with your dagger, turn to **79**. If you have your sword, turn to **52**.

### **38**

You grope desperately with your left hand and feel, ever so briefly, a tiny crack in the smooth wall. For a second, you have a glimmer of hope that you might have saved yourself.

But that second passes all too quickly. The plaster beneath the fingers of your left hand also crumbles, and you topple backward from the wall. The next stop, nearly fifty feet down, will be your last. . . .

### **39**

Your blade strikes home! Lurching backward, the guard collapses into the muddy ditch. In a moment you have followed him.

Before any of the other guards make it to the top of the ditch, you have ducked into the same tunnel by which you entered the castle. The uproar you have created is enough to convince you to look for another means of gaining entry into Castle Quarras.

You remember the abandoned section of wall that old Pieter told you about, on the other side of the castle. Quickly you circle the huge structure, being careful to avoid the frequent guard patrols.

Turn to **184**.

Your hand misses the window ledge by scant inches, and with a sickening feeling, you realize that the next secure handhold is a hundred feet below.

By the time you get there, you know that you will not need it.



Bleeding and exhausted, you decide that retreat from the castle is the only sensible course of action. Stepping over the motionless bodies of the zombies, you cross the moonlit chamber back to the dark tunnel you passed through earlier.

Slowly you slosh your way through the water. Before long, you reach the first large chamber you entered and turn to the right. This time you hold your breath before you enter the tunnel and are able to avoid much of the problem caused by the noxious gas.

Finally you reach the storm grate and, worn and discouraged, pass through the streets of Quarras to your villa.

The mission will have to wait for another night. In the meantime, you can only regret that Quarras will continue to suffer under the reign of the spellbound king awhile longer.

You lurch forward, almost losing your balance, but before long you stumble into a large underground

chamber. Moonlight streams in through a grate in the ceiling, and the air is much fresher than that in the tunnel.

Stopping to catch your breath, you see three other tunnels leading out from the chamber. Straight ahead, the tunnel continues toward the castle, but that section of tunnel seems to smell as bad as the last passage.

You are not sure how far you have come, but you suspect that the tunnels to the left and right might lead to areas within the castle also. The tunnel to the left seems completely filled with water, however, and you would have to hold your breath while you swam underwater for an unknown distance. The tunnel to the right contains water that seems to be about chest-deep, so you should be able to wade there.

If you want to wade through the muck straight ahead, turn to **122**. If you would rather dive under the water to the left, turn to **135**. If you decide to wade through the tunnel at the right, turn to **25**.

## **43**

Shuffling your feet to make sure you don't trip over anything, you cautiously make your way through the darkness. After advancing several feet, your toes feel the edge of a dropoff of some kind before you.

A hurried investigation shows that you have reached a stairway. Carefully making your way downward, you count more than fifty steps. Obviously you have descended quite far into the castle. You might even be underground now.

Once more you stand in a level corridor. With the now familiar method of hands outstretched before you and feet shuffling along, you move on in the darkness.

Turn to **108**.



44

The force of your rush knocks the first guard onto his back. The second is too drunk, too stupid, or both, to react to your maneuver. In the flash of an instant, you are past!

Roars of rage erupt from the corridor behind you, directed as much at the guards who let you get by as toward yourself. The sound only spurs you on to greater speed.

Entering the room where you overheard the plot to murder the king, you quickly duck behind the tapestry. The door opposite you still stands slightly ajar, just as you left it.

Jerking it open, you leap through and close it behind you, hoping the lock will catch.

You breathe a sigh of relief as it does! Thunderous pounding tells you that the guards know which way you have gone, but for the moment they cannot follow you. Nevertheless, you waste no time clambering down the stairs and moving down the dank tunnel.

In a few minutes, you pass the chamber where you fought the zombies. Fortunately for you, there is no sign of life, or perhaps you should say "unlife." Wading through the watery tunnel, you finally make it back to the storm grate.



Once through the grate, you have to move carefully through the city as you return home. Many patrols of guards are about. Obviously your escape has created something of a stir.

Finally, as dawn creases the eastern sky, you make it to your villa. Collapsing in exhaustion, you fall into a deep sleep that lasts for many hours. Your mission inside Castle Quarras will have to wait for another night. Until then, the kingdom will continue to suffer beneath the tyranny of the charmed king.

## 45

Quickly you uncork the bottle containing your Potion of Invisibility. Grimacing, you swallow the bitter liquid and feel the magic take effect immediately. A slight numbness spreads into your limbs, but it quickly passes as you watch the outlines of your body and all of your possessions slowly fade from view. Soon you can hold your hand before your face and not even see the outline of your fingers.

"This stuff probably won't last long," you remind yourself. "I'd better make the most of it!"

Quickly you climb from the trench and start across the wide courtyard, keeping as far from the guards as possible. Even though you are invisible, you are not magically silenced. You are very much aware of a soft "squish" every time you plant one of your soggy boots ahead of the other.

Suddenly you are distracted by a cry from behind you. Turning, you see several guards gathered at the edge of the ditch you emerged from. They are calling to their comrades and gesturing excitedly toward the ground.

A surge of panic swells inside you as you see that the guards have discovered your muddy trail, leading to the very spot where you are standing!

Years of discipline allow you to quickly control your fear, however. Soon it is replaced by the familiar tingling sensation of adrenalin surging through your veins.

Senses heightened, muscles tensed for action, you quickly study the situation.

The guards have started following your trail and will reach your position soon. Fortunately, it's too dark for them to see the muddy tracks from any distance. Even so, the guards near the fire are fanning out to cover the courtyard, and several are moving almost directly toward you.

If you want to turn and race back to the ditch, then try to escape from the castle before you are discovered and captured, you might be able to stay in the shadows along the courtyard's high wall and remain undetected.

On the other hand, you could stay frozen in your present position and hope that the line of guards sweeping toward you from the fire will pass to either side of you. Then you could cross the courtyard quickly to the safety of the narrow corridors you can see leading off from the other side.

In either case, you must act quickly, for the guards will soon be upon you. If you want to run back to the ditch, turn to 62. If you decide to stay put, turn to 28.



## 46

Your free hand gropes in desperation. Finally you feel a thin lip of stone that just might offer enough surface to grip, but at that moment your tortured fingers give way from the strain. For a split second, you seem to hang motionless in space, and then you topple backward into space.

Your mind races. Your first thought is to try to land on your feet. While such a landing is not without considerable danger, any other result will almost certainly prove fatal.

The wall rushes by your eyes, only a few feet away. Conscious of the rapidly approaching pavement, you try to twist yourself into an upright position.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. Subtract 1 if you are carrying a sword, since the weapon will get in your way. If the total is 4 or more, turn to **153**. If it is 3 or less, turn to **196**.

## 47

You decide that the risk posed by Kharseron's presence in the other direction outweighs any threat presented by the guardrooms ahead of you. You wish you had brought your Potion of Invisibility, but it's still your best choice. Carefully you begin to move down the hallway.

The doors on either side are partly shut, so you can't see into the rooms but neither can anyone inside see you. From six or seven rooms, spaced evenly along each side of the corridor, you hear sounds of revelry as you pass.

You make it halfway through the corridor without incident, but you cannot relax since this is the most dangerous point. A single guard emerging from any of the rooms would be certain to discover you.

And then one of the doors opens.

Your heart leaps to your throat, but you have no time to react before several brawny guards stagger into the corridor only five feet in front of you!

"Hey!" one cries as he sees you. "What are you doing here?" he demands, his drunken grin replaced with a scowl of suspicion.

"Yeah!" another challenges. "Who are you?"

You instantly analyze your situation. Three drunken guards stand before you, blocking your path ahead. To the rear lie four doors, each leading to a crowded guardroom.

Escape would be difficult, perhaps impossible. The alternative, to surrender, does not strike you as attractive either.

"Speak up!" the third guard demands, reaching for his sword.

If you want to surrender, turn to 102. If you decide to make a run for it, turn to 84.

48

You decide that a climb over the remote section of wall would be the fastest and safest means of gaining entrance to the castle. Who knows what might lurk within the dank tunnels beyond the storm grate?

Turning your full attention to this alternative, you begin to form your plans. Deciding that there is nothing to be gained by delay, you make up your mind to attempt the mission tonight, when the moon will be almost new.

You know the streets of Quarras well, and you have no doubt about your ability to find the spot. As to what lies beyond the wall, within mighty Castle Quarras itself, only the future will tell.

The few hours until evening seem to pass impossibly slowly, but finally it's dark enough to begin your mission. Equipped with everything you have chosen

to bring along, yet still free to move swiftly and silently, you pass like a shadow through the city.

You notice, as you skirt the generally crowded tavern and plaza districts, that the back streets are unusually empty. An unseasonal chill in the air seems to have driven most people to the warmth of their homes.

Turn to 184.

## 49

Just as you feel that you have made it by successfully, something seems to startle the ogre. It turns quickly and bumps squarely into you.

Grunting in astonishment, the brute nevertheless reacts with amazing quickness. Two brawny arms reach outward, and the monster's hands grope in the air mere inches from your throat.

"That far enough!" it grunts, realizing that only a man, albeit an invisible one, faces it.

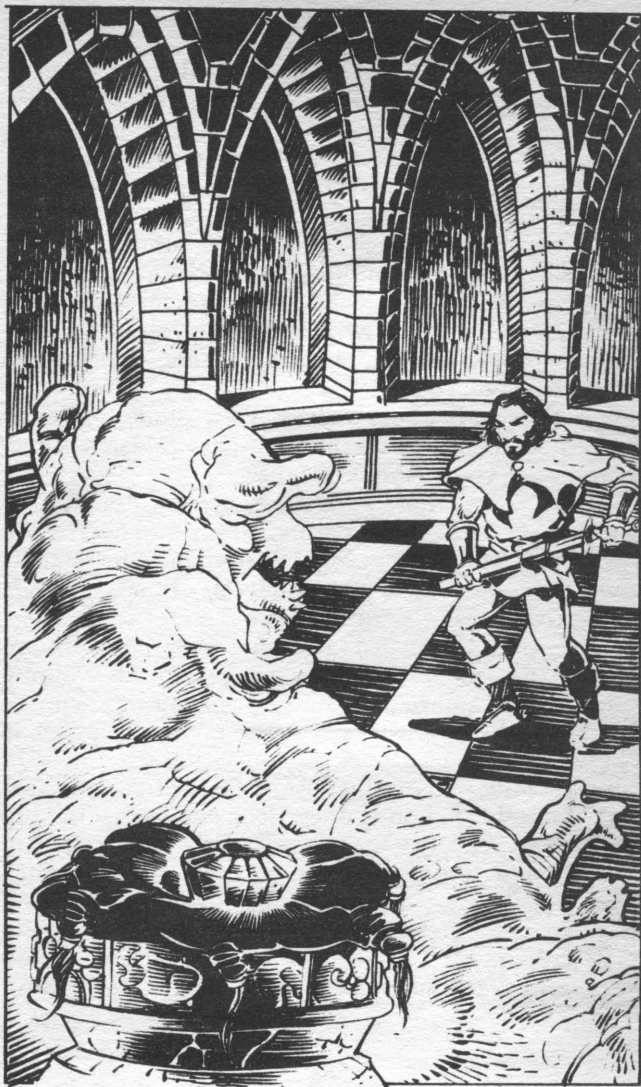
The ogre is immense, and obviously an experienced fighter. You will have to silence it quickly if you are to have any chance of escaping capture. Raising your hand, you aim a blow for the monster's chin that you hope will knock it unconscious.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 11 or more, turn to 103. If it is 10 or less, turn to 2.

## 50

At first your eyes make out only a white, shapeless form that gradually materializes on the other side of the gem. It is as if some kind of mysterious force is pulling crystals of frost together to form a sinister mound of ice before your eyes.

Then you see armlike appendages begin to grow right out of the sides of the blob. A clear, icy aperture





opens in the thing's front, a horrifying caricature of a mouth.

And then it begins to slither toward you.

Sliding along the icy floor like some kind of bizarre slug, the blob's mouth seems to grope through the air, as if seeking something. Finally it seems to stop searching, but your heart chills as you realize that it is facing in your direction.

Frantically you search the room for some avenue of escape, but the only visible exits are the six windows. You know what lies beyond them, but for a moment you wonder if a long, swift leap to the stones a hundred feet below might not be preferable to the nameless horror before you.

Instead you resolutely draw your blade and drop into a fighting crouch. Whatever this monstrosity is, it won't get you without a fight.

As the blob slithers past the glowing Gem of Illystia, the creature seems to grow larger and even more horrifying. Towering at least as high as your head, it must, you guess, outweigh you by five or six times. It seems to move faster as it grows.

Retreating backward around the circular room, you try to keep the gem between you and the nameless monster. You reason that, as the gem's presumed guardian, the blob will not make any attack that is likely to harm the stone.

It continues to move faster and faster. Soon you feel your feet slipping on the icy floor as you try to stay ahead of it. Finally you fall, twisting around just rapidly enough to switch your weapon to your other hand to keep it between you and the ice creature.

The monster stops as soon as you fall and draws its grotesque mouth back. You see a discomfoting resemblance to a man preparing to smash something with his fist.

In desperation, you lash outward with your blade! If you can slash into the beast before it strikes, you might be able to do some significant damage.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if your weapon is a sword. If the result is 11 or more, turn to **86**. If it is 10 or less, turn to **17**.

51

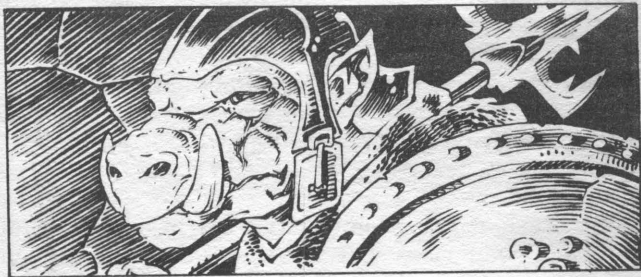
The guard is a skilled swordsman, but this time, at least, you are a better one. Badly wounded, he staggers back and drops his sword.

Instantly you look for a route of escape. The wall is at your back, towering ten feet or so above you. You hear guards coming from all other directions, though, so it looks like the only way to go is up.

As you turn toward the wall, you see out of the corner of your eye an angry mob of guards approaching. The wall looms impossibly high, but you know you've got to jump for it.

Calling upon every last ounce of strength in your muscles, you leap from the ground and stretch toward the top of the wall.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **198**. If it is 4 or less, turn to **35**.



## 52

As soon as you recognize the undead horrors sloshing toward you, you draw your sword and drop to a fighting crouch. The keen blade of your weapon waves menacingly at the zombies, and even their dim intelligence recognizes the weapon as some kind of threat.

Their steady advance temporarily halted, the three zombies spread farther apart in an effort to surround you, but you hold them at a distance with the point of your sword.

As the creatures move farther into the moonlight, you see that they are truly grotesque. Pale bones show through their rotting flesh, and their stench is nearly unbearable. White, grinning teeth cut garish slashes through their mangled faces.

Cautiously the zombies continue to close in. One moves toward your front while the other two approach from either side.

If you strike quickly, you might be able to stop one of the zombies approaching from the side before the other two can react. The idea deserves a try, and it certainly beats going down to certain death beneath the combined attack of all three.

The monsters close in slowly, and you take advantage of this fact to spin to your right, slashing violently with your sword. You intend to behead the zombie, figuring that any wound less severe might not stop the creature.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **164**. If it is 9 or less, turn to **117**.

## 53

You stare at the wide courtyard. The tall spire of the Gemtower rises scarcely a hundred yards from

you, yet it might as well be on another planet. Even if you climb down the wall and cross the plaza safely, how will you ascend the lofty tower?

Suddenly a noise intrudes upon your thoughts. You turn to see a door in the base of a guard tower swing open. A cloaked figure emerges, walking along the wall toward the very spot where you stand!

Quickly you melt back into the shadows alongside a side wall. As the figure approaches, you recognize the gaunt, sinister form of the king's wizard, Kharseron!

Scarcely daring to breathe, you remain still as the wizard passes only a few yards from you. The shadows that conceal you are thick, but you suspect that the senses of a wizard are very keen indeed.

Roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. If you have the Gem of Magical Resistance, add 2 to the result. If the total is 5 or less, turn to 158. If the total is 6 or more, turn to 65.



54

Tossing your weapon to the ground, you raise your hands over your head. "I surrender," you say resignedly.

Quickly your now completely visible hands are bound behind your back. They search you thoroughly and remove all of your possessions.

The guards grab your arms and shove you roughly toward the looming bulk of Castle Quarras's Great Hall. Turn to 16.

**55**

The walkway leading farther into the castle is narrower than the one you have been following, but you see nothing moving along it.

Passing directly under the statue, you start down the narrower walkway.

Suddenly a savage blow smashes you from behind, sending you hurtling to the edge of the parapet. Blood streams from several ugly cuts in your back.

Subtract 7 hit points of damage, or 6 if you have the Cloak of Protection.

Turning quickly, you see that the statue has come to life! Its vicious claws are smeared with your blood, and a nightmarish leer distorts its face.

Uttering a low sound, almost like a chuckle, the gargoyle advances. Its leathery wings beat a slow, menacing pulse, and it seems to glide toward you.

Desperately you reach to your side, grabbing for your weapon. Did you bring your sword, or at least your dagger?

If you are unarmed, turn to 6. If you have your sword or dagger, turn to 96.



**56**

Your thrust ends just short of its mark as the wily swordsman spins deftly out of your path. Your

momentum carries you past him, and you feel the sharp sting of his blade in your side. Deduct 4 points of damage from your total hit points.

Wincing from the pain, you turn again to face your adversary, who surprisingly shows no sign of following up his advantage. You soon see why, for within seconds you are surrounded by a ring of glittering steel. Several dozen guards have arrived on the scene, with more coming every second.

Ruefully you drop your blade and raise your hands. The guards grab you roughly, forcing your arms behind your back and binding them securely.

Then they jerk you along in a mob, heading for the looming bulk of the Great Hall of Castle Quarras. Turn to 16.

57

You feel your feet slide suddenly sideways, washed out from under you by the force of the sudden current of water. Your shoulder slams into the hard stone floor, and you feel the rushing water carry you through a mad tumble down a long, winding chute.

With water splashing into your mouth and nose, you struggle in vain to see in the pitch darkness. Sputtering and choking, you struggle to slow down, but the force of the current is too strong.

Finally you feel yourself shoot out into space. For a split second, you see the moon above, and you realize that you must be outside. Then you splash into dark, chilly water.

Struggling to the surface, you see a high wall and several towers looming over you. Instantly you recognize your surroundings: you have splashed into the wide, deep moat that surrounds Castle Quarras.

Your blood freezes as you remember the inhabitants of the moat—dozens of monstrous crocodiles,



kept ravenously hungry at all times!

Instantly you hear splashing on all sides. Obviously the vile reptiles have heard your arrival and are slithering through the dark water to make a meal of you. Even as you start to swim, you see a cavernous maw open directly in front of your face!

Ivory white teeth glisten inches before your eyes as the huge reptile surges through the water. Impassive, cold eyes regard you, and a mighty tail flails to push the huge crocodile forward.

Quickly you start to draw your sword, but your movements are terribly slow in the constraining water. Finally the weapon comes free, and you make a desperate stab just as the huge croc closes in for the kill.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 9 or less, turn to **132**. If it is 10 or more, turn to **3**.



**58**

You watch the wizard disappear through the trapdoor and climb slowly down the ladder. The moment of opportunity has passed.

Carefully you move out from under the flying boat and approach the trapdoor, which still emanates the frightening blue glow from the Gem of Illystia.

Peering carefully over the edge, you feel a brush of

cold air against your face. The circular room below has a heavy coat of frost on the floor, walls, and ceiling. The fabulous Gem of Illystia, balanced on a pedestal in the center of the room, seems to be the source of this chill.

You turn your attention once more to the wizard. At the bottom of the ladder, he turns and slowly approaches the gem, as if approaching a deity.

Once again you have a chance to attack. His back is facing you and his attention is riveted to the gem.

If you want to continue watching for a while longer to see what happens next, turn to **119**. If you decide to attack the wizard now, turn to **18**.

## 59

You hear a distinct *clunk* as the metal grapple hook strikes the top of the tower. For a moment, you are hopeful that you've succeeded.

Abruptly the rope begins to gather in a pile at your feet and you know that the grapple hook is on its way back down. You barely have time to spring safely to the side before the hook lands in the middle of the pile of rope.

Realizing that you have to try again, you recoil the rope and repeat the process, trying for an even more powerful swing than before. Once again the hook goes flying up into the darkness.

Roll one die and add either your agility skill score or your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 8 or more, turn to **168**. If it is 7 or less, turn to **183**.

## 60

Deciding that you must escape the icy attacks of this monster at all costs, you leap up onto the narrow window niche. The beast's icy attack blasts into the ground at your feet, but you escape damage.

The monster prepares for another attack, and now you are trapped unless you go out the window.

Uttering a silent prayer, you make your way to the outer edge of the niche and glance up at the overhanging parapet, impossibly far away. You don't need to look down to imagine the distance to the ground.

And then you leap up into space, thinking no more about what is at stake. Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 7 or less, turn to 140. If it is 8 or more, turn to 5.

## 61

A huge chunk of ice caroms off your skull, and you reel drunkenly on the stairs. Another smashes into your chest, and you feel your balance slipping away.

Certain that you have discovered the Gemtower, for nowhere else in Castle Quarras would you encounter such potent magic, you have time for one fleeting last thought as you tumble from the stairs and join the mass of ice plummeting through the tower's central shaft.

You were so close. . . .

## 62

You decide to try to make your escape while you have the chance. The same moment you make the decision, you begin racing for the ditch. The guards hear your footsteps, but they can't tell where you are and look around in confusion.

"Over here!" one of them calls from some distance away, and you are relieved to see that most of the guards have turned their attention toward the other end of the courtyard.

Only two guards remain near the ditch now, blocking your escape route. You slow to a walk and hope

that your invisibility will carry you past them.

*Squish, squish.* The sound from your wet boots seems to thunder through the courtyard, and you notice the two guards by the ditch peering suspiciously in your direction. Suddenly they draw their blades and race toward you!

"Over here!" one of them shouts. "It's something invisible, and it's trying to get away!"

With their swords thrust forward, the two men have almost reached you. You are cornered against the courtyard wall, and know that you will have to fight. If you have your sword or dagger, turn to **75**. If you do not have a weapon, turn to **105**.

**63**

You feel as though your body is entrapped in mud, forcing you to move with fatal slowness. The assassin's dagger flashes toward you, and you feel its cruel bite.

Instantly hot pain surges through your body, only to be quickly replaced by numbness as the fast-acting poison does its work. Slumping to the ground as the assassin hurries off, you realize that the Kingdom of Quarras is going to have to be saved without your help.

**64**

You attempt to work through the tangle of bars, trying to slide under them as you did on the way in. They seem to slant inward, however, making it harder to slip past them in this direction.

With a furious kick, you spring outward and stop quickly. Panic rises in your throat as you realize that your sword belt is hooked around one of the bars. Desperately you struggle to unfasten the belt clasp.

Your lungs scream out for air, but the buckle

refuses to give. With a gasp of despair, you let out your last breath in the murky water beneath Castle Quarras.



**65**

The wizard continues on past you, apparently lost in thought, and you relax slightly. Still not daring to move, you watch as he reaches the juncture of the three walls.

Turn to 142.

**66**

Carefully you ease yourself out of the ditch. Muddy water leaks from your boots and leggings, dripping audibly onto the ground. You hope the two remaining guards are too immersed in their grumbling about their duty to notice you.

Gradually, crawling along the ground, you reach the wall of the courtyard, where the shadows are

thickest. Now you rise to a low crouch and dart along the wall, seeking one of the corridors leading from the courtyard.

Roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **151**. If it is 4 or less, turn to **31**.

**67**

Snatching the torch from its socket, you decide to risk any magical dangers the torch might possess. You have grown weary of wandering through complete darkness!

Cautiously you begin to ascend the spiraling stairway. As you climb higher, you look back down the shaft in the center of the stairway into the blackness below. Although the steps are only about three feet wide, you have no fear of heights, luckily.

As you climb ever higher, you begin to be convinced that you have really discovered the Gemtower! Gradually you begin to make out a platform above, which seems to mark the end of the stairway.

In a few minutes, you reach the top of the stairs.

Turn to **180**.

**68**

*I've lost too much time already!* you think. You decide not to bother with the grapple. Instead you'll make the climb without it, trusting your bare hands and your skill in climbing.

Once you make up your mind, action follows swiftly. Quickly you coil the rope and grapple and sling it over your shoulder. Then you step to the base of the tower and look for the best place to make your ascent.

The stones of the pillar are laid in a repeating pattern. The hand and footholds won't be deep, but as an



accomplished thief you've dealt with such challenges before.

Carefully placing your hands in the highest possible holds, you hoist yourself up until your feet find niches to support them. Then you alternate first a hand, then a foot, as you slowly begin to scale the tower.

Beads of perspiration dot your brow as you inch your way toward the lofty top. At first, holds are not hard to come by. About thirty feet up, however, you reach a section where you can't find a safe niche for even a finger.

You know that you face a very tricky situation. Carefully you reach high above your head with your right hand and locate a tiny hollow between two layers of stone. For a brief, terrifying moment, your entire body is suspended by your fingertips as you tense your right arm and reach upward with your left to secure another hold.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **161**. If it is 5 or less, turn to **46**.



**69**

Carefully you start down the dimly lit hallway, watching the half-open doorways beyond which you

hear the guards carousing. Suddenly more light spills into the corridor as one of the doors is pulled open!

Fortunately you have time to duck back out of the corridor before anyone emerges from the room. Much to your relief, you hear several guards tromping down the corridor away from you.

Once more you wonder if this is a good idea. At any moment, more guards could emerge from either door. Once you get more than a few feet into the hallway, you won't be able to duck back out of sight and will certainly be discovered by anyone who happens along.

Of course, you can always return to the corridor Kharseron followed. Suddenly you remember the Potion of Invisibility! Did you bring it along with you? If you did, it might be just the ticket to get you down this corridor safely.

If you want to return to the corridor Kharseron used, turn to **20**. If you have the Potion of Invisibility and want to take it, turn to **148**. If you don't have the potion but decide to venture through the corridor by the guardrooms anyway, turn to **47**.

**70**

Your blade flashes forward, straight toward the evil wizard's heart. At the same time, his hands reach out toward you, and a hideous sneer crosses his face.

The tip of your weapon catches in his loose robe, and Kharseron stumbles sideways. His concentration broken, the wizard curses at his wasted spell.

Although you did not succeed in wounding the mage, you gain valuable time with your attack. He staggers backward and begins to cast another spell, while you lunge forward for another attack.

Roll one die and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 9 or less, turn to **92**. If it is 10 or more, turn to **34**.

## **71**

The sudden rush of the guard alerts your keen fighting senses. Your hand flies to your weapon, and in a flash you face the guard steel to steel.

The massive guard pauses at the sight of your blade, warily probing with his own weapon. "An intruder, eh?" he mutters. "I'll get a fancy reward when I present your head to the king!"

The words seem intended to boost his own courage as much as anything else. For all of his size, the guard displays a timid hesitancy with his weapon.

You decide to test your hypothesis by a sudden attack. If your theory is correct, the guard will back off, perhaps leaving you an opening.

"Ha!" you shout, and suddenly spring forward. The guard panics and steps backward suddenly, tripping over his own feet in his haste. With a heavy thud, he falls on his back.

You follow up slowly, confident of your advantage, and this is nearly your undoing. With a speed born of raw panic, the guard lurches to his feet and brings his sword up in a desperate lunge!

Ducking, you attempt to make a counterthrust. Cursing your overconfidence, you see that it will be close!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if you are using a sword. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **12**. If it is 9 or less, turn to **181**.

## **72**

You are convinced that the monster must possess some kind of dim intelligence, for it seems to have

anticipated your move. Rolling ponderously, but with surprising swiftness, out of the path of your thrust, it twists around just enough to bring its mouth into line with your left shoulder.

*Whoosh!* Once again the icy blast of air slams into you, sending you hurtling across the room.

If you do not have the Gem of Magic Resistance, subtract 4 hit points of damage. If you have the gem, deduct 2 hit points of damage.

Scrambling wildly to get to your feet, you face the creature as it slides eagerly after you. Again its vile head rises up and back, and once again you have a chance to strike!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if you are using a sword. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **76**. If it is 10 or less, repeat this section.



**73**

A short time later, you reach the storm grate. The loose stones the old man described come away easily, and you are able to pull aside the iron bars without much effort.

Slipping through the narrow opening, you find yourself standing in ankle-deep mire. The stench almost overpowers you at first.

Taking care to relocate the bars of the grate behind you, you turn and move into the dank tunnel. A low stone ceiling forces you to bend low, and the unidenti-

fiable dark substance now coating you to your knees turns your stomach.

As you feel your way through the darkness with your hands, you begin to grow faint and dizzy. Suddenly your mind focuses on a disturbing thought: you are being overcome by the fumes in the tunnel!

At the same time, you think you detect a faint glimmer of light ahead. You can't remember how far it is back to the storm grate and fresh air, but you know you must get out of this tunnel soon!

If you want to turn back for the storm grate, turn to 32. But if you decide to forge ahead, turn to 42.



74

Once again your keen blade does not fail you, plunging straight into the croc's eye. The second crocodile thrashes away in pain, and once more you strike out for the shore.

In a few moments, you drag your weary, aching body onto the muddy shore. Ahead you see a grate through which water pours into the moat. Quickly you scramble up the slope and begin to pry at the iron screen over the hole.

In a matter of minutes, you have pried it back far enough for you to get through. Quickly you stagger home through the darkened streets of Quarras.

For now, you feel only relief at having escaped from Castle Quarras with your life. Your quest for the Gem of Illystia will have to await another night.

As the guards close in, your fighting instincts take over. Instantly you unsheathe your weapon. Holding the blade extended before you, you take advantage of your invisible state as the two guards begin to close in.

"See anything?" one of them calls to his comrade.

"I hear something," answers the second. You see that these are human guards, unfortunately. You would feel less guilty fighting the beastlike orcs instead.

Suddenly they lunge in your direction! Your wet footprints have betrayed you. Swinging your own weapon up, you deflect one guard's sword with a loud *clang*. Now the other guard stabs in your general direction.

You spin toward this new assault, trying to maneuver your blade to parry the attack and counterthrust.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. Add another 1 if you are using your sword. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **24**. If it is 9 or less, go to **143**.

You feel your blade slice deep into the chilly form of the ice creature, hacking another chunk of its body away. It rears back, almost in fear now, and you pursue your advantage.

Once again, however, the monster's frosty essence chills your skin and blisters your sword hand with frost.

If you are not carrying the Gem of Magic Resistance, subtract 1 hit point of damage.

Barely noticing the pain in your hand, you close in for the attack. The monster raises its head to strike at the same time.



Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if you are using a sword. If the total is 9 or less, turn to **72**. If it is 10 or more, turn to **167**.

## 77

You decide to take the time necessary to return home for your rope and grapple. Suppressing your frustration, you turn and start away from the castle.

Trotting swiftly and silently, you glide through the shadowy side street that led you to the castle wall.

Suddenly your ears detect the tromping of heavy boots, and you curse in frustration. A guard patrol!

In a moment, the marching soldiers come around a corner only twenty feet away. There are nearly a dozen of them.

Your thiefling instincts take over at the sight of the guards, and you quickly try to blend into the black shadows at the side of the dim street.

"Hey, you there!" the soldier at the head of the column shouts, and you know that you have been detected.

"Looks like a dirty thief!" another guard grunts, and at that, they break and run toward you like a pack of wild dogs!

Like a cornered alley cat, you turn and sprint for the nearest corner, about a hundred feet away. Unencumbered by armor and in top physical condition, you cut around the corner several seconds ahead of the guards.

Unfortunately, their yelling and shouting can't help but arouse other patrols. You must get out of sight fast! Even as you decide this, you spot another patrol at the far end of the street. They don't seem to have seen you yet.

There seem to be very few places to hide along this street, but at least there is very little light. Quickly

you duck into a niche between two narrow buildings.

Roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 6 or more, turn to **144**. If it is 5 or less, turn to **23**.

**78**

You decide that the darkened tunnel of the storm grate offers the best access to the heart of the castle, so you need only wait until nightfall to begin.

Finally, with only a sliver of moon to illuminate the darkness, you decide it is time. At midnight, you make your way through the darkened streets of Quarras toward the looming bulk of the castle, darker even than the inky blackness that surrounds you.

Impossibly distant, the faintest hint of a blue gleam marks your destination—the Gemtower.

Turn to **73**.



As the living dead close in upon you, you draw your puny dagger in what appears to be a last ditch fight. One of the zombies lifts a bony claw, and you slash desperately at it.

Shreds of rotted flesh fall from the zombie's arm as it grabs at your dagger and casually deflects the blow. Hideous eyes, resting in fleshless sockets, seem to mock your feeble attack.

Even as your blade digs deep into the undead monster's flesh, another of the hideous creatures fastens its bony hands around your left arm. The wounded zombie draws away, but before you can follow up your advantage, you feel the third zombie fall heavily on your back.

Stumbling forward, you try to twist away from the frightful creatures, but they cling to you with fanatical persistence. As you try to fling the two zombies aside, the third one grabs you around your knees.

Hopelessly outnumbered and underarmed, you splash headlong into the shallow water, held down by the weight of the undead bodies clinging to you.

Thrashing around with your head under the water, you feel your lungs fill with the murky water, and your world collapses in choking blackness.



You decide to keep in the shadows provided by the overhanging roof of the stalls. You risk disturbing the animals within their pens, but you will trust your

thiefly skills to move past the pens without alerting them.

The first pen contains a sow and her brood, all sleeping contentedly. Your feet move soundlessly as, like a shadow, you glide past the pigs. Next you slip by several pens of cows and horses as you pass the halfway point.

Abruptly you stop with a mute curse, for you nearly stumbled over a massive guard dog lying squarely across your path. With your foot poised in midair a scant inch from the great beast's shaggy flank, you slowly try to back up and move around the dog.

Roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 5 or more, turn to 147. If it is 4 or less, turn to 14.



81

You realize with despair that you have failed to bring any weapon with you!

And then the monster reaches you, its cruel claws grabbing each of your shoulders and tossing you savagely against the parapet.

You try to scramble to your feet, but the gargoyle reaches you before you can move. The stony strength of its body easily overcomes all your efforts to resist.

You know beyond a doubt this fight can have but one outcome. . . .

**82**

Desperate now, you force yourself through the tangle in the underwater tunnel and quickly swim back to the junction of the corridors. Here you catch a welcome breath as once more you examine the other two routes leading from the room.

If you choose to follow the muddy tunnel that continues in your original direction, turn to **122**. But if you want to see where the other watery tunnel leads, turn to **25**.

**83**

Barely pausing to catch your breath, you soon locate a trapdoor on the floor of the parapet. A quick pull and it is open.

You can hardly believe the transformation that has taken place in the room below! Already most of the frost has melted, running out as clear water through a similar trapdoor in the floor of the tower room.

The blue light cast by the Gem of Illystia seems to have taken on a warm, even friendly, light.

Dropping into the room, you move stealthily toward the stone.

Turn to **172**.



**84**

Tales of the dungeons beneath Castle Quarras run fleetingly through your mind, and you know that you cannot surrender. In an attempt to forestall any further questions, you raise one hand.

Confusion crosses the faces before you at this unex-

pected gesture, and in that instant you spin and dart down the corridor back toward the room where you saw the wizard and his assassin conferring.

**"STOP, THIEF!"**

The bellow echoes behind you in the corridor, and you feel certain that every guard in the castle must know of your presence now.

Shouts of alarm ring from every guardroom along the hallway as your flying feet carry you toward the far room and, you hope, safety.

Doors spring open to either side of you, and you see the surprised faces of the guards as you flash past.

But surprise quickly gives way to alarm as swords are drawn and the pounding of pursuing footsteps thunders in the hallway behind you. Your light leather boots enable you to keep ahead of the guards, however. If only you can reach the room you started from before you are captured. . . .

Suddenly the last door in the hallway flies open, and a pair of very drunken guards emerge into the corridor, directly in your path.

They look at you in shock, but one has the presence of mind to draw his sword and wave it in your general direction. This is no time to fight, but perhaps you can take advantage of the guards' drunken state and slip past them.

Of course, such a move represents a desperate gamble in the narrow corridor, but it seems that desperate gambles are the only kind you have left.

Just before you barrel headlong into the guards, you cut suddenly to the side of the corridor. Trying to roll along the wall like a sideways version of a log rolling down a hill, you crash into the guards.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **44**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **170**.



The second guard reacts amazingly quickly, and in dismay you see that your thrust stabs only air. Caught off balance, you can't protect against his counterattack and feel the sting of the guard's sword in your exposed flank.

Subtract 4 hit points of damage from your hit point total. If you have the Cloak of Protection, subtract only 3 hit points.

In the time that has elapsed while you've been battling the second guard, more than a dozen other guards have come to his aid. You find yourself fenced inside a ring of menacing steel.

Quickly you consider your options. You could make a desperate break for freedom, counting on surprise and whatever lingering benefits the Potion of Invisibility might provide. Or you could surrender and trust your luck to the mercy of the misguided king.

"Give up or die, whoever you are!" one of the surrounding warriors calls.

You must make your decision, for the glistening ring of swords is closing fast and you can see that you are just starting to become visible again. If you decide to surrender, turn to 54. If you want to make a run for it, turn to 114.



Your blade flashes like lightning. Before the monster can react, you have driven the weapon deep into its belly. Immediately gusts of steam pour from the wound, resembling a person's breath on a cold day.

You realize as you back away, however, that your hand has been injured from its proximity to the incredibly cold body. It feels almost as if you have been frostbitten.

If you do not have the Gem of Magic Resistance, subtract 1 hit point of damage. If you have the gem, you lose no hit points.

Watching as the monster slowly rolls backward, you wonder if you have finally frightened it off. Your doubts quickly vanish, however, as the beast suddenly slides forward on the icy floor. You barely scramble out of its way as it slides into the wall behind you. With astonishing quickness, it spins itself around and begins to slide after you again.

Now the creature's ugly head is drawn back again, and you are certain that the beast is preparing to attack. Once again you ready your weapon.

Sensing your opportunity, you thrust underneath its looming head, hoping to strike near the wound you delivered a moment earlier. At the same time, the monster drops its head to attack.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. Add 1 if you are using a sword. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **22**. If it is 10 or less, turn to **146**.

Abandoning caution, you decide to confront the guards with cold steel. Instantly your blade challenges the approach of the first guard. He holds his distance, obviously waiting for his companion.

But his caution betrays him. As he looks over his

shoulder to see his approaching comrade, he leaves himself open to your thrust. Seizing the opportunity to pick off your enemies piecemeal, you stab him through the heart. The guard dies before he realizes what happened.

The other guard slows and approaches carefully, sword extended. You realize from the way that he holds his sword that he must be an expert with a blade.

Although you are no slouch yourself, you suffer the disadvantage of having to end this fight quickly or soon face overwhelming odds. Your only chance is to attack.

You spring forward and make a direct thrust, but the guard parries it deftly and makes a lightning quick stab at your face. You barely dodge quickly enough to get out of the way, but you find yourself running out of time.

Once again you attack, feverishly calling upon every ounce of your skill. Now you press the guard back, but it sounds like dozens more are approaching fast.

Your opponent seems to be weakening, desperately trying to parry your slashing attack. You sense that you almost have him.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **51**. If it is 9 or less, turn to **56**.

## **88**

Your blind leap falls short of the portcullis, and you feel yourself dropping swiftly into the darkness of the pit. Abruptly you smash into a hard stone floor, perhaps a dozen feet below.

Subtract 3 points of damage from your hit point total.

Picking yourself up slowly, you groan in pain, but you don't seem to have any broken bones. You dropped your sword when you fell, but a quick search turns it up nearby.

Still wincing in pain, you feel around in the darkness to study your new surroundings. Turn to **33**.

**89**

The door clicks shut softly behind you, and you hold your breath as the guards march past the door. Your blood freezes as the footsteps suddenly stop.

The light of a torch blinds your eyes as the door flies open. Two swords thrust out from the light toward your heart.

Reacting without thinking, you draw your own sword. Your eyes adjust to the light quickly, but the guards attack as if you are still blinded.

Their carelessness costs them dearly as one guard falls to the floor, fatally wounded. The other now puts up his guard, and you close in, hoping to get this fight over with quickly.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 9 or less, turn to **155**. If it is 10 or more, turn to **118**.

**90**

Patience has never been one of your virtues. Tonight, therefore, you feel you have no choice but to press on, climbing the wall without the rope rather than wasting half the night on one of the other options.

You approach the wall and examine it carefully. A number of the cracks gape wide enough for you to use as handholds. Certainly you have climbed more treacherous surfaces in your lifetime.

Without further delay, you begin your ascent.

Arms extended far above your head, you find a pair of firm holds and lift yourself up.

Your feet quickly find secure toeholds, and you begin to inch your way up the wall. The cracks are wide and the stone of the wall seems secure, so your progress is fairly rapid.

An unusually smooth stretch of wall about twenty feet up gives you some difficulty, but you study your route carefully and soon find a way to move off to the side and find a safer route upward.

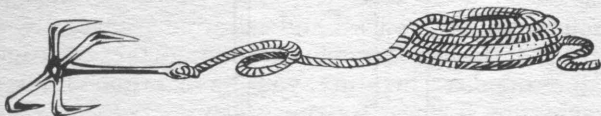
It isn't long before you have climbed to within a dozen feet of the top of the wall. Here, to your chagrin, a coat of smooth plaster covers the cracks. Although you can see smaller cracks marring the surface of the plaster, the stretch from here to the top will be much more treacherous than the portion of the wall you have already climbed.

Carefully finding a hold in a small crack, you lift yourself upward and reach for another hold. Repeating this process several times, you inch ever closer to the top of the wall.

Suddenly you feel the plaster begin to crumble under your right hand. Desperately stretching out with your left hand, you try to cling to a tiny niche as you feel yourself losing your balance.

Can you hang on?

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 5 or less, turn to **38**. If it is 6 or more, turn to **165**.



The icy layer of hail blankets the center of the plaza for a good distance around the Gemtower. Whatever awesome force brought forth the unnatural storm, it must be more powerful than you thought.

Is the Gem really worth dying for?

You begin to realize that the price of continuing your mission may well be your life. Certainly the route up the outside of the tower seems impassable.

Perhaps another way to the top of the Gemtower lies concealed somewhere within Castle Quarras, yet you have no clue where it may be. You have already examined the bottom of the tower for secret doors and found no entrance.

Discouraged, you rise to your feet and begin to move down the passageway in an effort to put some distance between you and the tower. If another route lies hidden somewhere, perhaps you will be lucky enough to find it.

In the back of your mind, you also consider whether you should get out of this fortress and escape with your life. You really don't know what to do.

Moving stealthily through the hallway, you soon find yourself in a darkened, apparently unused part of the castle. Now that you think of it, all of the areas near the Gemtower seem deserted.

The corridor passes through several intersections, with passages branching off to both sides. Several times you must guess which of several corridors to follow.

It isn't long before you realize that you are hopelessly lost.

The huge castle seems to squat menacingly around you, preventing your escape. You start down a corridor identical to half a dozen others you have just passed through. In the almost pitch-darkness, confu-



sion and despair begin to overwhelm you.

Suddenly a loud clanging sound brings you back to your senses. Whirling, you draw your blade and stand ready to fight.

In the dim light, you barely can make out a portcullis of sturdy iron bars. It apparently dropped from the ceiling behind you, blocking your path of return.

Seconds later, you hear a sudden click below you, and you feel the floor start to drop away! Flinging yourself outward and upward toward the portcullis, you attempt to grab its bars before you fall into the unknown depths.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **162**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **88**.

## **92**

Once again the wizard proves to be a wily opponent. Dodging gracefully out of your path, as if the evasion is simply part of his spell-casting, Kharseron unleashes his magic.

A swirling pattern of colors and shapes flashes toward you, surrounding you in a hypnotic rainbow of color. Suddenly the vision turns dark and horrifying, as skeletal claws reach toward you and a grinning skull mocks you.

Inside of a second, everything goes black. . . . forever.

## **93**

You pick the moment for your escape carefully. After a short time, both guards become engrossed in a low conversation, and you see your chance.

Leaping to your feet, you wrench your hands from behind your back and feel the bonds fall loose. Before the guards have even turned to look at you, you have



picked up a chair and started to throw it.

If you can just delay the guards for a few seconds, you think you can lose them in the castle. After that, you'll trust your thieflly skills to get you home alive.

The chair flies through the air just as the guards start to react. Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 4 or less, turn to **139**. If it is 5 or more, turn to **107**.



**94**

A swift survey of the parapet reveals a square trapdoor, set near one edge of the platform. It seems to promise the entrance you seek. A large iron ring provides a hold, and you carefully pull the trapdoor open.

Cold blue light spills from the entrance, and below, you see the Gem of Illystia! A chill seems to rise from the room along with the unnatural light.

Quickly you drop the eight feet to the floor of the room, nearly slipping on the icy surface. For the first time, you notice that the walls, ceiling, and floor of the chamber are all thickly coated with frost.

Suddenly a strong gust of wind sweeps through the room, throwing you off balance. You grab at a nearby window niche for support, but your hand goes right through the fragile pane of glass. The window shatters with a loud crash, but your attention is already diverted toward the gem. Next to the gleaming stone, in the room you thought was abandoned, something has started to move. Turn to **50**.

You lurch and stumble along, soon losing all track of time. You fall for what must be the dozenth time, and the tunnel seems to whirl as you climb to your feet. You realize that you have lost all track of direction. Before long, your foot catches on a stone and you again fall facedown in the mud. This time you are too weak to move, and gradually a deep and poisonous sleep crawls over your motionless form. . . .

With a lightning thrust, you pull your blade from your belt and extend the weapon toward the advancing gargoyle. Immediately, as if the animated statue possesses some crude form of intelligence, it slows its advance.

Grinning at you with hideous fangs, the monster makes several savage slices through the air with its claws. The fact that you are armed has slowed, but not stopped, its approach.

Suddenly the gargoyle springs toward you, aided by the powerful beat of its batlike wings. You dodge quickly to the side and bring your weapon around in a quick thrust, just as the creature's monstrous claws slash at your face.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 2 to the result if you are using your sword. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **136**. If it is 12 or less, turn to **10**.



## 97

Desperately you whip your weapon back to make another slash at the savage dog. The beast is too quick, however.

Its massive paws catch you full in the chest and you fall onto your back. Powerful jaws clamp into your arm, and you wince from the pain. You need all of your willpower to keep you from crying out. Subtract 4 points of damage from your hit point total.

Rolling to one side, you scramble to your feet, still brandishing your blade. The great dog has whirled completely around and once again leaps toward you.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 9 or more, turn to 141. If it is 8 or less, repeat this section.

## 98

Silently you merge back into the shadows, and the wizard turns to go on his way. By a great effort of will, you slow your breathing to normal, but you can still feel your heart pounding in panic.

Following Kharseron again, you see the wizard open a heavy door that leads to the top of one of Castle Quarras's inner walls. In a moment, you pass through the same door into the starlit night.

Kharseron strides quickly along, obviously moving with purpose. Soon he reaches a juncture of three walls, which drop to a wide plaza in the center of the castle. Rising from the middle of this plaza is the looming, sinister spire of the Gemtower.

Turn to 142.

## 99

You decide to risk whatever lies within the tower instead of almost certain death if you attempt to climb higher. Turning your body around in the nar-

row niche, you draw your weapon and prepare to kick in the glass.

The silence of the night is shattered as your boot crashes easily through the eerie glass. As you look into the room, your eyes are immediately drawn to the center of the circular chamber.

Perched atop a pedestal, lined with the plushiest of velvets, sits the icy blue Gem of Illystia.

Sensing that the end of your mission is near at hand, you carefully enter the room and shake off several shards of glass that have stuck to you. Looking around, you see that the entire chamber is lined with a glittering white reflective material, causing the magical blue light of the mysterious gem to be reflected and magnified a hundredfold.

The room seems to be empty except for the glistening gem. The white lining on the walls, floor, and ceiling proves to be frost, and you immediately notice an intense, biting chill to the air.

Then suddenly, across the room, you see something move. Turn to 50.



100

Your hand catches fleetingly at the edge of the drop-off, but your fingers can't overcome the momentum of your slide.

Teetering on the brink of disaster, you begin to lose your balance. A black hole awaits you below.

It turns out to be a very, very deep hole.





## 101

With the echoes of the falling grapple still resounding through the plaza, you decide that common sense dictates that you must take cover temporarily.

Quickly and quietly you dash across the plaza to the corridor. Once within the safety of its shadowy confines, you turn your attention back to the courtyard, trying to force your eyes to penetrate the darkness for any sign of movement.

Now that you're settled, you notice that it seems to have gotten very cold. For several minutes, your breathing muffled and muscles taut, you see no sign of life.

Then your eyes are drawn to the top of the tower. Seeming to grow from the chill blue of the tower's high windows, a gray and angry cloud is gathering. It seems to stay clustered around the peak of the spire, although it billows and churns ominously.

You realize with a sense of dread that powerful and deadly magic pulses before you. Soon the sinister cloud begins to release monstrous hailstones that pound the courtyard at the tower's base mercilessly.

A shudder passes through you, not so much from the cold as from the thought of those gigantic hailstones pummeling your body. You shudder to think what would have happened to you if you hadn't retreated to the corridor.

Soon the hailstorm ends as suddenly as it began, leaving the plaza carpeted in icy mounds. You sit

down in the corridor to ponder this evidence of evil magic, wondering how you are ever going to get to the top of the Gemtower. Turn to **91**.

**102**

You decide that the odds against you are too great. Trying to flee from the large number of guards that will surely swarm into the corridor when an alarm is raised strikes you as suicide.

Reluctantly you raise your hands.

"Out here, men!" calls one of your captors. "Look what we've got here . . . a thief!"

In moments, rough hands have disarmed you and trussed your arms behind you. With a rowdy escort of drunken guards, you are prodded through the maze of passages inside Castle Quarras. Turn to **21**.

**103**

Aided by your invisibility, your fist flashes between the ogre's upraised hands and crunches solidly into its chin. A dazed look crosses its face as it slowly slumps forward.

Ducking out of the way, you find yourself finally within the corridor, although the monster lies in the entryway and prevents you from closing the door.

Deciding not to bother with moving it, you turn and trot swiftly down the hall. You hear no sounds of alarm from the courtyard behind you, so you assume that your escape has gone unnoticed.

You hear loud snores emerging from the rooms to either side as you move down the narrow, torchlit corridor. Many swords and shields are slung on hooks along the hallway. Obviously you are passing through one of the barracks of the castle guards.

Stopping only to arm yourself with one of the handy longswords, you have soon passed the bar-

racks and find yourself moving alone through the darkened corridors of Castle Quarras. Ahead, somewhere close, lies the Gemtower. Turn to 191.



## 104

The towering wall shouldn't present a serious obstacle. You are thankful that you brought your grapple. It has proven to be one of your most valuable thief's tools. Quickly you uncoil the rope from your shoulder and study the wall.

A row of battlements along the top of the wall should provide a solid grip for the hook after you make the throw. Of course, things could turn decidedly dangerous if a guard patrol stumbled upon your grapple while you are making the climb. You can only hope that the old man's story about the lack of patrols here is true.

Carefully you coil the rope at your feet so that it can play out freely as you throw the hook. You swing the hook in ever-widening circles to build up momentum, then fling it into the starry sky.

In a few short seconds, you hear a muffled *clunk* above you. The hook fails to fall back to earth, so you tug on the rope. It pulls taut. The grapple found a secure hold on the first throw.

You take a quick look around the shadowy street, again seeing no sign of anyone else nearby. Then you turn back to the wall and begin to walk up the smooth surface, pulling yourself hand over hand by the sturdy rope.

The climb goes quickly, and in a few minutes you grab hold of the parapet and pull yourself up between a pair of stout battlements. No sound disturbs the quiet night.

Pulling yourself into the shadows behind the rampart, you swiftly coil the rope while you have a look around.

The top of the wall stretches several dozen feet wide and a hundred yards in either direction. Another wall joins this one about a hundred feet away, providing a walkway that leads toward the interior of the castle. Still far in the distance, the ghostly blue windows at the top of the Gemtower remind you of your mission.

Just as old Pieter had promised, this area seems totally free of guards.

Crouching down to make best use of the shadows, you quickly move along the wall toward the intersection of the walkway that you saw. The nearly inaudible padding of your feet on the stones is the only sound that disturbs the still night air.

Suddenly you stop short! Ahead of you, barely two dozen feet away, stands an immobile form. It's perched like a vulture exactly at your destination, the juncture of the two walls.

For a moment, you think that the object is a guard, but you relax as you realize that it is just a statue—a fearsome and ugly statue to be sure, however. Its stony face distorted by a hideous grin, the stone creature's ugly fangs protrude from its gaping mouth. Long, wicked claws form the end of each finger, and a



pair of stone wings billow batlike behind it.

Suppressing a shudder, you wonder who would build such an abomination. Carefully you make your way up to the intersection and look around cautiously before starting along the wall leading toward the Gemtower.

Roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 4 or less, turn to **55**. If it is 5 or more, turn to **130**.

## 105

Cursing your lack of foresight in failing to bring a weapon, you desperately attempt to dodge the thrusting swords of the two guards. They obviously have a good fix on your position, however, since the deadly blades are only a foot apart, and each is positioned to skewer you if you cannot evade the attack.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **19**. If it is less than 7, turn to **173**.

## 106

Your blade whistles toward the remaining zombie's neck, but by some cursed bad fortune, the creature stumbles just before the blow strikes and splashes heavily into the muddy water. Quickly it lurches to its feet again, and you see that you will have to attack more carefully.

As you close in, your foot suddenly catches on the same obstacle—apparently a large block of stone—and you stumble forward. The zombie's claws reach out and slash at your back as you go down.

Subtract 3 hit points of damage, or 2 if you have the Cloak of Protection.

Desperately trying to recover your balance, you lunge to get out of the way of the hideous creature.



Anger begins to cloud your judgment, but you swiftly subdue the emotion. Experience has shown you that anger can be detrimental in battle.

You know you are close to winning this fight. The first two zombies show no signs of regaining their feet, and this last opponent, you feel confident, will fall shortly.

Carefully you close in, circling your sword slowly before the monster's awful face. Then, like lightning, you strike!

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 8 or less, repeat this section. If the total is 9 or more, turn to 154.

## 107

You watch in satisfaction as the hurtling chair flattens one of the guards. The other one quickly hurls something at your head, and you recognize a wine bottle flying toward you.

Ducking the missile, you turn and jerk open the door. The second guard rushes across the room to try to stop you, but the heavy door catches him full in the face.

Instantly you bolt through the opening into a vacant corridor. Keeping to the shadows, you make your way toward the gates. You know that too much of an alarm has been raised for you to continue your mission tonight. The best you can hope for is to escape from the castle with your life.

A long, cold night passes as you hide in the castle stables, buried in dirty hay. With the arrival of dawn, you hide under a tarp on the liveryman's wagon as he rides from the castle to the marketplace for fodder.

You arrive at your home tired, sore, and frustrated. Your mission at Castle Quarras will require more planning before you can hope to succeed.



108

For what seems like hours, you wander through the dark corridors beneath Castle Quarras. Your arms tire from the strain of reaching out to feel your way along the walls, yet you continue to hold them extended, for they are your only eyes.

You have been walking down a long, straight corridor. For some time no side passages have appeared, and now you begin to notice an unnatural chill in the air.

With surprise, you realize that the dampness along the walls has turned to frost! Whatever the source of this cold, it seems strange and sinister to you.

Finally you see a strong yellow light beaming in the distance before you, reflecting weirdly along the frost-rimed walls. Picking up your pace a little, you approach the source of the light.

You soon see a torch, stuck into a socket on the wall of the corridor and blazing brightly. You notice no soot over the flame, however, and the burning wood seems polished and uncharred.

You also notice that this is the end of the corridor. A heavy door blocks the passage just beyond the torch. Moving forward carefully, you notice that the door doesn't seem to be locked.

You push the door open to reveal a long stairway leading up in a tight spiral. It looks like the inside of

a tower, and your mind naturally leaps to a hopeful conclusion—the Gemtower!

You have one way to find out for sure. As you look up the stairs, you see no light illuminating them beyond that from the mysterious torch outside the doorway at the bottom.

Should you remove the torch and carry it up with you? Or, since there seems to be something decidedly strange about it, would you be better off leaving it where it is?

If you decide not to take the torch with you, turn to **199**. If you decide to take it, turn to **67**.



**109**

Gasping and choking, you finally collapse against the cold iron bars of the storm grate and suck in great lungfuls of fresh air. Nearly unconscious, you work the grate free and let it drop unnoticed into the tunnel. You crawl out and slowly make your way home.

It takes you until dawn to reach the safety of your villa. Sick and bedraggled, you collapse in your bed and tell yourself that you are lucky to get out of Castle Quarras alive.

**110**

This time, you resolve, your blow will not waver from its mark. Your feet planted firmly, you use every

muscle in your shoulder, back, and arm to hack your blade across the monster's icy gut.

Ice chips explode into your face and hand as the beast roars and draws backward suddenly. You realize that this is the first time you have heard it make any noise. You also notice that the skin of your right hand is cracked and bleeding from the rain of sharp ice chips during your attack.

If you do not have the Gem of Magic Resistance, subtract 1 hit point of damage. You receive no damage if you are carrying the gem.

Once again the monster presses its attack, but this time it approaches you a little more cautiously. You see steam, like warm breath on a cold day, pouring from the cut that you made in the creature's belly. This time you see no opportunity to attack, and you are forced to circle backward around the room once again.

You feel a gust of warm air at your back, and you realize that you are near the window you broke when you entered the tower room. The monster pauses and draws back its head, apparently preparing for another attack.

Blood from the wound on your hand stains the icy floor of the room. How much more of this creature's relentless pursuit can you take? Can you ever hope to slay it?

There is one other alternative, you realize: out the window and down! But then you recall the overhanging parapet above the window. Would it be possible for you to leap from the window up to the stone overhang, grabbing it before you plummet to certain death in the courtyard below?

The idea is so ridiculous that you almost laugh out loud! You would have to make an acrobatic leap more difficult than anything you have done in your life.

Yet the alternative is not very attractive either. The monster's head is poised for another attack, and its wound doesn't seem to be slowing it in the least. Is it worth risking your life for a long-shot chance to escape?

If you decide to make a desperate leap out the window, turn to **60**. If you choose to continue fighting the creature, turn to **126**.

### **111**

Deftly you slip your blade in for a deadly thrust, but the wily assassin surprises you again with his quickness. Twisting to the side, he avoids your attack.

Before you can recover your balance, he thrusts his dagger toward you. Can you dodge the poisoned tip in time?

Roll one die and add your agility skill score to the result. If the total is 6 or less, turn to **63**. If it is 7 or more, turn to **160**.

### **112**

Carefully you study the plaza before you. About a hundred yards separate the end of the corridor where you stand from the base of the tower. As far as you can tell, the entire plaza is deserted.

The Gemtower rises into the night for nearly a hundred feet. Neither door nor window breaks its monotonous dark surface for about the first ninety feet of the spire. Ringing the top of the structure, however, are six narrow windows. Squinting your eyes, you can make out a faint blue glow emanating from these windows.

Unconsciously you pull your tunic more tightly about your shoulders. You suddenly feel very cold.

Deciding there is nothing to gain by waiting, you

make up your mind to cross the plaza and investigate the base of the tower, convinced that there is nothing in the courtyard.

Darting from the corridor entrance, you crouch low to the ground and swiftly cross the plaza to the base of the tower. All around you, darkness cloaks the courtyard.

Arriving at the tower's base, you examine the surface that seemed so smooth from a distance. To your relief, you see that the tower's surface is actually a fairly common masonry pattern. Its stone glistens darkly as you study its surface and note large cracks between the blocks of stone.

Quickly circling the base of the tower, you examine the entire surface at ground level for any sign of an entrance but see none. Looking upward, you consider the risks involved in attempting to climb the tower.

If you have your rope and grapple, the ascent shouldn't be too difficult. Without them, however, the task looms formidable and dangerous. Nonetheless, you feel that you can climb the tower with or without your rope and grapple.

Did you bring the rope and grapple? If so, do you want to try to use it? If you are going to use the rope and grapple, turn to **179**. If not, turn to **133**.

**113**

Deciding that the climb to the top seems less dangerous than a blind entrance through the window, you swing free from the niche. For a moment, you sway sickeningly over the courtyard far below.

Quickly, you pull yourself up the last few feet and crawl over the ledge onto the security of the parapet. Swiftly coiling your rope, you look around for some way to get into the tower.

Turn to **94**.



**114**

You make up your mind not to surrender. A life spent in the dungeons of Castle Quarras is not worth living.

You see no gap between the shoulders of the encircling guards, however. In desperation, you hurl yourself at a pair of them. The suddenness of your attack allows you to push them momentarily to the side.

But the odds against you are too great, and you note with dismay that your visibility is rapidly returning. Four more swordsmen cut off your retreat. Several sharp swordblades thrust toward you, and for the first, and last, time in your life, you cannot escape.

**115**

The wizard's feet are less than two feet from your face as you lie on the platform of the Gemtower, breathlessly trying to conceal your presence. You feel certain that you have made no sound.

Yet somehow the sorcerer detects you.

You see the wizard's gaunt body bend in the middle, and you find yourself staring into a pair of evil black eyes.

"Come to me," Kharseron rasps in a haunting voice. Unwilling, but unable to resist, you crawl from beneath the boat and rise to your feet. For some reason, the wizard doesn't seem so sinister anymore.

"Let us talk," the voice rasps at you once more.

Turn to 188.

**116**

You decide not to risk a chance of an ambush by whatever might lie beyond the blue window. Of course, the room might be empty, but your senses warn you to beware.



You move out to the edge of the niche. The fresh air here seems almost summery compared to the temperature next to the frosty window. You reach up and quickly find a wide crack in the overhang.

Wedging your fist firmly inside the crack, you swing out sickeningly far from the tower wall. The hard stone of the plaza, one hundred feet below, weighs heavily on your mind. Gritting your teeth, you strain upward with your other hand and find a protruding stone that feels as if it will hold your weight. Letting your feet drop free, you try to lift yourself upward with the strength of your arms.

Suddenly you feel the stone break loose! Your left hand drops free, and other hand and your quick reflexes are all that can stave off disaster. Desperately you try to swing back to the niche!

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **189**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **40**.

## 117

You swipe viciously at the grinning zombie with your keen blade, but from somewhere the creature finds enough speed to lift its arm and deflect the blow. You watch, chagrined, as the blade bounces off the zombie's tough forearm.

At the same time, you feel a ripping cut along your left side, and you realize that one of the other monsters has slashed you with its bony claws. Bleeding, you stagger back and you feel yourself weakening by the moment as the creatures repeat their three-pronged attack. Once again you must try to stop one of the monsters before its partners can gang up on you.

Twisting quickly to the side, you aim a powerful thrust for the head of the zombie to your left. Its

empty eyesockets show no reaction to your attack, but its grinning teeth seem to mock you.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 9 or less, repeat this section. If it is 10 or better, turn to **164**.



**118**

This time your keen blade finds its mark in the breast of your victim, and he joins his comrade on the floor of the room.

Suddenly you hear more footsteps approaching in the hallway. Leaping to the door, you manage to shut it before anyone comes into sight.

Unfortunately, the torch is outside, and once again you find yourself in a totally darkened room. Turn to **7**.

**119**

Once again you decide not to attack the powerful wizard. Instead you watch as he reaches the gem and lays his hands upon it.

Immediately the air grows colder, and a low moaning sound rises as an arcane wind whirls around the room below. You feel as though a bright light has been cast upon you and that the wizard surely knows you are there.

Abruptly Kharseron whirls and confronts you with his deep black eyes. You feel like a butterfly pinned to a mat in somebody's collection.

"Come here, my friend," the wizard says in a whispering tone. Somehow he no longer strikes you as menacing.

You descend the ladder under the watchful eyes of the mighty wizard and finally stand before him.

"Now," he continues. "We shall talk."

Turn to 188.



## 120

The guard charges forward, his gleaming blade pointed straight toward your heart! Instinctively you dodge to the side, but not before the cold steel slices into your side.

Subtract 3 points of damage from your total hit points. If you have the Cloak of Protection, deduct only 2 points.

Carried forward by the momentum of his attack, the massive guard sticks his sword into the heavy wooden door you just closed. Angrily he shifts his balance and tugs on the blade.

You recognize what might be your only chance! The guard is momentarily distracted, but his grip on the weapon is firm. You'll have to knock his arm away and grab the weapon yourself before he pulls it from

the door, or once more you will face his attack without a weapon to defend yourself!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **127**. If it is 11 or less, turn to **171**.

**121**

Your blade strikes out for the crocodile's eye, but at the last minute the monster rolls on its side, and your blow bounces harmlessly off its scaly hide.

A split second later, you feel strong jaws clutch you firmly as the beast drops to the bottom of the moat.

At least the crocodile will eat well tonight.



**122**

You decide to follow the tunnel leading in the direction you were heading, hoping that it will lead you far into the castle.

As you start out, the muck clutches at your feet much as it did when you first entered the storm grate, but the odor of gas is not so strong. In a few minutes you reach an end to the tunnel.

You see that the tunnel mouth drains water from a long ditch that crosses one of the castle courtyards before spilling its contents down a slippery chute into the tunnel. You realize you have made it inside the castle's inner wall.

Slithering forward up the chute, you cautiously lift your head over the edge. Several dozen guards stand



casually around a fire about a hundred feet away. Frequent peals of rowdy laughter indicate that their attention is not on you.

"It's a long way to the tower," you tell yourself. "I'll have to be careful!"

Too much light illuminates the courtyard for your taste. You wouldn't feel comfortable trying to slip out of the ditch, unless the guards were to move on.

Then you remember your Potion of Invisibility! Did you bring it with you? If you did, this might be the time to drink it. Then again, maybe you should just wait and see if the guards move on soon.

If you have the potion and want to drink it, cross it off your Character Stats Card and turn to 45. If you don't have the potion, or you decide to save it, turn to 193.



## 123

Springing out from under the magical craft, you draw your blade and hurry toward Kharseron's back. Your frantic dive carries you into the magic-user's frail body, and the two of you fall down the ladder and smash into the floor of the room below.

Slipping on the floor, which you realize with a start is coated with ice, you scramble to your feet and thrust your weapon toward the evil wizard's breast. At the same instant, Kharseron begins chanting—an

indication that you feel quite certain bodes you no good.

Roll one die and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 9 or less, turn to **70**. If it is 10 or more, turn to **34**.

**124**

Jagged pieces of ice smash into your body over and over again, threatening to throw you from your precarious perch on the stairway, but somehow you manage to keep your balance and withstand the savage beating.

The avalanche passes in a matter of seconds, though it seemed like hours to you. In those few seconds, however, you suffered a pounding worse than in any fight.

Subtract 10 hit points of damage. If you do not have the Gem of Magic Resistance, roll one die and subtract the resulting number of additional hit points.

Battered and bruised, you lean against the wall of the tower and try to collect your thoughts. What kind of unnatural force could have released such an attack?

Absently your eyes wander to the base of the tower, where you see that the accumulated snow and ice have already melted in a wide arc in the area near the strange torch.

The torch! You guessed that it possessed magical properties, but now you begin to understand its function. The enchanted flame must provide some sort of protection against the ice storm.

Glancing upward, you see that another mass of ice is already starting to collect at the top of the tower, so you hurry back down the stairs and grab the torch from its bracket.

This time, proceeding upward with the steady

flame before you, you reach the top of the spiral without difficulty. As you suspected, the ice you saw collecting there has vanished.

Turn to 180.



## 125

Deciding to seize the opportunity to gain entrance to the building while you have it, you stealthily draw your weapon and move to one side of the monstrous guard, who has now advanced several steps forward.

“Who there?” the ogre demands again.

Suppressing a twinge of guilt at your invisible attack upon an unsuspecting victim, you aim the hilt of your weapon at the monster’s brutish skull, hoping to stun it with one blow.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 9 or more, turn to 157. If it is 8 or less, turn to 187.

## 126

You decide that leaping from the window would be foolhardy, so you prepare for another attack from the ice creature. Assuming that you can find no other way out of this room, you’ll have to figure out some way to kill it if you’re going to survive this fight.

Once again the brutish head rears back, and you know that it’s about to strike. For a brief second, how-

ever, the unprotected belly of the ice creature is exposed.

Your foot braced firmly against the outer wall, you thrust forward with your blade, attempting to drive it deep into the icy blob.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if you are using a sword. If the total is 11 or more, turn to **76**. If it's 10 or less, turn to **72**.

**127**

Smashing the edge of your hand onto the guard's wrist with all your strength, you knock his hand free from the hilt of his sword. Howling in pain, he staggers backward.

"My wrist! You broke it!" he wails.

His troubles soon compound as you grab the blade and confront him with its keen point.

"No!" he screams, dropping to his knees.

With a twinge of guilt, you knock him on the head with the heavy hilt of his sword and he falls, unconscious.

Pausing in the still corridor, you listen for any sound of alarm that the guard's hysterics might have aroused but hear nothing. Turn to **166**.



**128**

Your fingernails catch desperately at the edge of the dropoff. You can feel them tearing painfully from the strain of your desperate hold, but somehow you manage to halt your slide. From the waist down, your body hangs into empty space, over a deep black hole of unknown depth.

Holding tight until your breathing returns to some semblance of normal, you try to pull yourself back up into the solid stone corridor. As you maneuver your legs to swing them up, you are surprised to find no wall off to one side of the corridor.

An investigation reveals a tunnel, leading from the stairwell-trap, that escaped your notice when you first climbed the stairs. Perhaps the entrance wasn't even there before the trap was sprung.

At any event, it seems to offer you a route away from this dead-end corridor, and you take it gratefully. Holding one hand to the wall on each side of you and feeling carefully ahead with your feet, you move deeper into the darkness below Castle Quarras.

Turn to 108.

**129**

The door slides silently closed behind you as you hear the guards march past. In a moment, their footsteps have receded down the corridor. Just as you start to open the door, however, you hear another group of guards approaching.

It seems that the corridor you just vacated has a lot of traffic. Perhaps it would be better to look for another way out. Turn to 7.

**130**

Suddenly you stop short, frozen by some sixth sense of warning! Something just moved, and the implica-

tions of that thought chill your blood, for you are alone, except for the statue.

Then you see it again: The stony, batlike wings of the grotesque sculpture slowly flex, and the gruesome head swivels about to stare at you. It seems that the creature's grin grows wider.



Hopping from the parapet to the stone walkway in front of you, the monster makes a hollow, chuckling sound. It advances with outstretched claws.

Swiftly you reach for your weapon. But did you bring your sword or dagger with you?

If you did not bring a weapon, turn to 81. If you brought either the sword or the dagger, turn to 156.

**131**

The line plays out rapidly as the grapple soars for the high parapet. In a moment, you hear it strike the platform above you. Carefully you pull on the rope,



tensing yourself in case the hook should suddenly plummet to earth.

You heave a sigh of relief when the rope holds! Yanking on it several times, you finally suspend all your weight on the line to satisfy yourself that it's secure.

Swinging your feet against the side of the tower, you begin to work your way up. Your hands are stiff from the cold, and supporting your weight proves painful.

Again you wonder about the cold. You hadn't even noticed it fifteen minutes ago, but now it feels as if Quarras has been plunged into an abrupt winter.

The rope feels stiff and unwieldy in your hands, which are starting to blister from what seems to be frostbite. What's happening, anyway?

Abruptly your eyes meet the cold, bluish white glass on one of the windows at the top of the tower. You hadn't realized that your climb had progressed this far.

But you are in serious trouble. Your hands feel ready to lose their grip, and you know that a fall from this high would surely be fatal.

Your eyes stare in fascination at the blue glass. An evil force seems to radiate from it, a force that has somehow been awakened by your presence.

It is the last thought that you have as your fingers give way and you hurtle backward into space.



Kicking your feet powerfully, you swim straight toward the giant reptile until the gapings jaws are less than a yard from your face. You strike out viciously with your blade, but the point merely bounces off the scaly armor of the crocodile.

Instantly the monstrous beast forces you beneath the water with its massive body. You feel powerful jaws clamp down on your midsection.

And you know that you won't be coming up for air.



The only means of gaining the top of the tower without using a rope and grapple seems to be a daring climb straight up the face of the tower itself.

Again you examine the face of the tower. There seem to be plenty of hand and footholds here at ground level, but you can only hope that they continue all the way to the top. If not, you could be caught in a very awkward situation.

But you realize there is no time to worry about that now. Firmly wedging your fingers into a crevice as high up the wall as you can reach, you hoist yourself up until you can gain footing in a couple of narrow cracks. Then you stretch your hands up over your head, one at a time, and gain another foot or two of height.

Gradually you repeat the process, working your way up the black face of the Gemtower. For several

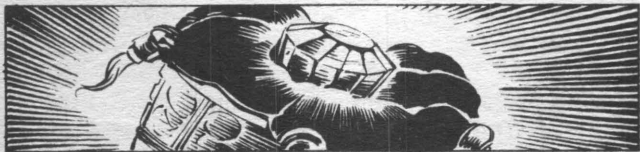
minutes, you are able to climb steadily, getting higher and higher above the hard stone of the plaza.

About thirty feet up, however, you suddenly run out of secure holds. Each foot is precariously jammed into a narrow crack, while with one hand you grope above you for a safe handhold.

The best grip you can find is merely a little knob of stone, barely large enough to catch your fingernails. You know that this tiny outcrop will be all that stands between you and a dangerous fall, but you don't seem to have another choice.

Taking a deep breath, you let go with your other hand and strain upward for another hold. Now one foot swings free, and your fingers throb with pain. If only you can reach another small piece of security! Then your other foot comes free and you hang, desperately pulling yourself up by your fingertips while you seek another niche for your other hand.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **161**. If it is 4 or less, turn to **46**.



## 134

Groping around in the inky blackness, you soon discover that you have fallen into a stone corridor. The passage seems to come to a dead end immediately behind you, but it extends for an unknown distance in the other direction.

You decide to stumble forward through this subterranean passage and hope that you find some means of exit. Perhaps escape from the castle no longer is

your primary motive. Right now, you would be thankful just to see the light of the moon again.

The corridor descends through a flight of stairs, then branches off in several different directions into the impenetrable gloom.

Stumbling through the inky darkness, you soon realize that you are hopelessly lost. It requires all your willpower to place one foot in front of the other, and blind hope is all that leads you on. Will you find some escape from this dark dungeon, or will you end your days here?

You have no way of knowing.

Turn to 108.

### 135

You turn to the left toward the tunnel that slants down under the water. Twenty feet from where you stand, it's completely filled. You decide to swim underwater for thirty seconds, and if you can't surface by then, you'll turn back.

The chill waters close over your head as you plunge under the surface. Powerful strokes carry you rapidly forward.

You slide easily under some obstacle, but then your hands strike a solid surface before you. A quick search shows that you have come to a dead end.

Quickly you reverse direction. You find yourself moving under a tangle of metal bars. The obstacle seems to be a completely submerged storm grate.

Your lungs begin to strain for oxygen, and you fight to contain your panic as you seek a path back through the tangled maze. Desperately you seize the bars and pull yourself forward.

Roll one die and subtract 3 from the result if you are wearing your sword. If the total is 1 or more, turn to 82. If it is 0 or less, turn to 64.



### 136

No expression crosses the creature's stony face as your blade bites into the gargoyle's side, but its body seems to cry out in pain. Dropping its grotesque wings, the monster lunges backward. The weird chuckling sound has changed to a low screech.

Following up on your advantage, you press in with another attack. The creature still has plenty of fight, however, for it reacts with a slashing attack of its own.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 2 if you are using a sword. If the total is 11 or less, turn to **169**. If it is 12 or more, turn to **26**.

### 137

The climb over the parapet looks too risky, even with the aid of your rope. Perhaps your nerves are a bit shaken. In any event, you decide to break in the window and take your chances on whatever might be lurking within the tower room.

First you plant your feet securely in the niche outside the window. Then you flip the rope upward until the grapple falls free. Coiling the line over your shoulder securely, you turn your attention back to the window.

The pane of glass is an icy bluish white color, and although the mysterious glow passes through it, you

can make out no details of what lies within the mysterious room.

"Too late for worrying now, anyway!" you mutter.

Twisting about so that your feet face the window and your shoulders are braced against the sides of the niche, you kick hard against the glass. It shatters easily.

You catch your breath as you get your first clear look at the mystical Gem of Illystia. The large, glowing stone sits upon an ornate pedestal in the midst of a plush cushion made of the finest velvet.

Slowly and carefully you enter the room. Looking around, you see that the walls, ceiling, and floor are all coated with a glistening white crytsalline substance. One touch tells you that is frost.

Nothing else seems to occupy the room, which is very cold. The light spilling from the gem lights up the entire chamber in stark whiteness. Slowly you begin to approach the pedestal.

Suddenly, on the other side of the room, you see something start to move. Turn to 50.



138

Tensely you jiggle the tiny piece of metal wire in the heavy clasp. Suddenly your lockpicking tool



snaps in two! Obviously the solid hasp is too much for your lockpicking abilities.

Cursing silently, you consider your alternatives. The only way out of the castle that you know of leads past the grim horror of the zombie lair, yet your forward progress is blocked by the solid oak door.

Disgusted, you turn and move back down the stairs. Your only hope seems to lie in finding some passage that escaped your notice the first time you came this way.

Suddenly your feet shoot out from under you and you smash onto your back, sliding down a smooth chute where a moment earlier had been a solid stairway! Slippery stone walls whiz by, and you realize that you must have triggered some kind of trap that transformed the stairs into this treacherous slide.

In another second, the surface supporting you ends in a sheer drop, and you feel yourself starting to fall out into space. Desperately you reach out, seeking any handhold.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 4 or less, turn to **100**. If it is 5 or better, turn to **128**.



The guards react with surprising quickness, and you watch in dismay as the chair sails harmlessly past them. Turning to make a break for the door, you suddenly drop to the floor as a crushing blow slams into the back of your head.

Lying amid a sticky circle of wetness on the ground, you realize as you regain consciousness moments later that one of the guards must have thrown a wine bottle at you. There's a dull throbbing pain in your head. But even more painful is the frustration of your foiled escape, as your hands are once again bound behind your back.

More guards arrive shortly, and you are jerked roughly to your feet. Your escorts then march you directly toward a large building that you recognize at once as the Great Hall of Castle Quarras.

Turn to 16.



You don't even come close.

Your hand flails wildly at the air above you as you tumble end over end through space, only stopping when you meet the unforgiving stones below.

You whip your blade back as the dog's slaverling fangs reach for your throat. A split second later

would have been too late, but the keen steel of your weapon slices a long, thin red line through the dog's side.

Soundlessly the huge dog drops to the floor, and you quickly pull him out of sight. In moments, you have covered its huge body with straw and crossed the remainder of the courtyard.

Once again you enter the relative security of a darkened corridor. You could see the looming spire of the Gemtower rising beyond the walls of the open courtyard, and you know that you are near your goal.

Soon the corridor you follow ends in a large plaza, wider by far than any open area you have seen thus far in Castle Quarras. In the center of the plaza, rising like a black spire to the stars, stands the ominous Gemtower. Turn to 112.



## 142

The Gemtower rises into the night sky in the open courtyard before Kharseron. Watching from the shadows, you feel there is something very sinister about the chill blue light spilling from the windows at the top of the tower. Without knowing why, you feel certain that those rays are of magical origin.

Your attention returns to Kharseron, who has reached into a pocket of his robe and pulled out what

looks like a small cube. Muttering unintelligibly, he hurls the cube to the floor and steps back.

Astonished, you watch as the tiny cube begins to grow and change shape before your eyes! In a minute, what looks like a small boat, equipped with a pair of batlike wings, has materialized on the platform.

Quickly Kharseron climbs into the boat, which you guess must be some kind of magical transportation. Immediately it begins to issue a low whirring sound, and the wings begin to beat slowly. Almost imperceptibly at first, the weird device begins to rise from the platform into the air. As if he were piloting some kind of sailboat, the wizard grabs a tiller at the back of the flying ship and steers it toward the Gemtower.

You realize instantly that the boat will soon float right over your head, and just as quickly, you see a way to get to the Gemtower. You are certain the tower is Kharseron's objective.

As the boat sails above you, barely two feet from your crouching form, you reach up and grab one of the long, narrow skids that run along the bottom of the mysterious craft.

As you feel your feet lift, you half expect the craft to plummet to the ground from your additional weight, but it doesn't even sway.

Clinging tightly beneath the magical boat, you overcome a momentary feeling of nausea as it floats over the parapet and coasts toward the tower, with the courtyard some forty feet below. You hear the wizard repeatedly chanting an arcane phrase, and you guess that he is speaking some kind of a charm to keep the craft airborne.

The crossing to the tower passes so swiftly that your arms don't even get tired. The wizard steers the craft over the battlement at the top of the

towering Gemtower and slowly lowers it to a platform below.

To your relief, you find that by pulling yourself to a prone position on top of the skids, you can avoid having the structure come down on top of you. Slowly the strange ship comes to a gentle landing atop the tower platform.

You hold yourself very still as Kharseron steps from his flying boat and pauses, as if looking for any suspicious watchers.

Roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. If you have the Gem of Magic Resistance, add 2 to your roll. If the total is 5 or less, turn to 115. If it is 6 or more, turn to 15.

### 143

The guard responds to your attack with surprising agility, leaping back out of the way of your thrust. A clean miss!

Before you can recover, the other guard slashes at your outthrust arm, and you feel the cold blade cut into your shoulder.

Unless you have the Cloak of Protection, deduct 3 hit points of damage from your total. If you have the cloak, subtract 2 hit points.

You realize you have made enough noise to give the guards a good idea of your location, and now both swordsmen are closing in for the kill. Barely managing to parry several savage attacks, you suddenly see a momentary opening.

With the swiftness of a striking cobra, you make your attack.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score. Add 1 to the result if you have your sword. If the total is 10 or more, turn to 24. If it is 9 or less, repeat this section.





144

Your black clothing seems to blend invisibly into the shadows in the narrow alley. A smile of satisfaction crosses your face as the two groups of guards meet in the street before you, quickly search the area, and then run into another side street.

Your satisfaction turns into chagrin, however, as you realize that the hue and cry throughout Quarras will prevent you from completing your mission tonight.

More guards troop through the street, forcing you to remain in your cramped hideout for hours. Dawn already colors the sky by the time you arrive home, cold and sore.

The saving of the kingdom will have to wait for another night.

145

You decide that the odds against winning if you fight now are hopeless. You throw down your sword and raise your hands as the guards approach.

"What do we have here?" growls a burly sergeant.

Several guards have swords extended as you grope for an answer.

"Never mind," the sergeant continues. "Bring him along!"

The other guards leap to obey, binding your arms tightly behind your back. Then they lead you roughly into a long, darkened hallway. Turn to 21.





146

Your thrust is quick and accurate, but the beast proves even quicker. Rearing back even more, so that your blade does little more than scratch its underside, it lashes its blunt head forward as you pull back.

The gruesome mouth halts a foot from your face, and suddenly a blast of cold air explodes at you point blank. Recoiling in shock, you slip on the floor and crash onto your back. Your eyes sting horribly, and you realize you cannot see!

If you do not have the Gem of Magic Resistance, subtract 6 hit points of damage. If you have the gem, you lose only 3 points.

Sensing that the monster is closing in for the kill, you frantically roll to one side and try to regain your feet. Rubbing your eyes with both hands, it suddenly occurs to you that you have dropped your sword!

A surge of panic overwhelms you momentarily, but you recover quickly. You note with relief that your vision is slowly returning. You can make out the Gem of Illystia in the center of the room.

And then you see something move between you and the gem, and you know that the monster is again on the attack. Sliding along as quickly as you can on the icy floor, you attempt to stay just ahead of the creature as you circle the room. Finally you see some-

thing glittering on the floor ahead of you, and you slither forward to reclaim your sword.

Your vision has returned fully now, and you see the monster bearing down on you again. Quickly you raise your blade and prepare to meet the charge.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add another 1 if you are using a sword. If the total is 10 or more, turn to **76**. If it is 9 or less, turn to **72**.

## 147

With barely a whisper of sound, your foot drops to earth again, and you slowly slide around the sleeping guard dog. After several more steps, you feel that you can finally breathe again.

The rest of your passage through the stable is uneventful. Soon you find yourself in the relative safety of the darkened corridor at the far side of the stable. Your path, you saw from the open courtyard, takes you directly toward the lofty spire of the Gemtower.

This corridor soon emerges into a wide plaza. The area, you note grimly, is completely devoid of all protective cover. In the exact center of the circular clearing rises the slim black needle of the Gemtower. Turn to **112**.



Quickly you reach into your pouch and pull out the small vial containing your magical potion. The clear liquid flows easily down your throat, and immediately you see your body and possessions vanishing before your eyes. Even your clothes fade away, until you see no sign of yourself.

This is not the first time that you have made yourself magically invisible, but the feeling is always a strange one. Holding your hand inches from your eyes, you look right through it as if it doesn't exist, always an unsettling experience.

Once again you enter the corridor leading past the guardrooms. Rowdy laughter and crude conversation is going on in several of the rooms you pass.

You reach the halfway point and see that the corridor ends in a wide courtyard. Suddenly two of the doors open simultaneously and a dozen guards stagger into the hall behind you.

Laughing uproariously, they stumble toward you. Holding your breath, you flatten yourself against the wall of the corridor and hope that the guards move past you without bumping into you.

As the guards shuffle past, one of them brushes against your chest, but another is in the midst of a bawdy story and he doesn't seem to notice. In another moment, the danger is past.

Closely following the guards so that the noise of their passage masks any sound that you might make, you pass into the wide courtyard. Here you dart away from the guards and make it easily to a shadowy niche in the corner of the area.

Looking around, you realize that you have in fact moved farther away from your objective by taking that hallway. You can't see the Gemtower from your present position, but you recognize some of the other

lofty reaches of Castle Quarras and are able to get your bearings.

In a moment, you have figured out the direction that you need to go and trot rapidly across the courtyard. The invisibility only lasts a short time, and you want to cover as much ground as possible before it wears off.

A minute later, you have reached your objective: a wide flight of stairs leading to the guardwalk atop the castle wall. Sprinting up the stairs, you soon reach a high parapet and your view improves considerably.

Looking behind you, you can see the entire city of Quarras, sprawled around its little bay and cheerfully illuminated by the lights of a thousand torches and lanterns. To the other side, high above you, looms the Gemtower with its icy blue glow at the top. The peak of the structure still seems impossibly remote.

Yet you move toward it resolutely, freezing in place so as not to make a sound when one of the frequent patrols passes you.

The tops of the walls within the castle twist and wind like a maze, but you make steady progress toward your objective.

Finally you reach an intersection. The wall you have been following led straight toward the Gemtower, but it stops a hundred yards short of the mark. Side walls branch off both to the right and left. In front of you, the wall drops about thirty feet to a wide plaza that seems to surround the Gemtower on all sides.

As you reach this juncture, you notice that you are beginning to be able to see yourself again. The invisibility lasted just long enough for you to get this far. Turn to 53.



149

Bleeding, bruised, and discouraged, you are forced to concede that Castle Quarras has beaten you tonight. Your wounds send hot bolts of pain shooting through your body, and the idea of another climb up the tower is out of the question.

Of course, the problem of escaping from the castle carries no guarantee either, but you decide that your best chance is to leave the castle and try again another time.

Slowly you cross the plaza, heading for the corridor that you came through earlier. You find the corridor entrance and move into its dark confines. As you make your way back toward the castle walls, however, you come to a number of branches and side passages that you hadn't noticed before.

Soon you realize you have had to guess at your route a number of times, and you are forced to admit that you're lost. All you can do is blunder forward, hoping that the route you are following leads in the direction of the castle wall.

*Maybe I'll never find my way out,* you groan inwardly as the pain shoots through your sprained ankles.

Suddenly you hear a slight click from the ceiling behind you. Whirling, you turn just in time to see a heavy portcullis come crashing down, closing off



the corridor behind you. The heavy iron gate blocks all return.

You shrug off the occurrence, since it's not the direction you intended to go anyway, when you hear another ominous click. This time, the sound comes from the floor.

You barely have time to react as the floor suddenly begins to drop away from beneath you! Flinging yourself upward and outward toward the heavy bars of the portcullis, you attempt to grab them before you plummet into the unknown blackness below.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to **152**. If it is 6 or less, turn to **8**.

## **150**

For a moment, you feel certain that you will plummet to a stony death on the street below. The plaster is crumbling beneath your fingers, and you start to slip from the wall.

But then your foot, desperately searching along the wall for some kind of hold, catches in a small crack. That tiny hold is enough to restore your balance.

Ever so carefully, you probe with your free hand for another hold. Straining to reach high above you, you find a surprisingly wide niche. Stuffing your entire fist into the crack, you pull yourself up to a hold of reasonable security.

Curious, you examine the wide crack. It seems to reach far into the wall. You can't even reach the back of it with your extended fingers. You notice that it has curiously regular sides, not like the jagged edges of the cracks caused by normal weathering.

You can only come to one conclusion. This niche is man-made!

Once you make this startling discovery, your mind

begins to race. Why is it here? The crack must serve some purpose.

Your examination shows you an area where the stones show signs of abrasion, as if another stone regularly scrapes across the surface. In a moment, you have discovered a catch to release a hidden entrance, high on the face of the wall!

Turning the curiously shaped stone, you see a small section of the wall swing sideways, revealing a dark passage behind the wall! Although too small for a regular entrance, the aperture opens wide enough to admit your supple body.

In an instant, your feet are safe on a hard stone floor. Looking behind, you see that the passage you have entered is more like a window than a door. Obviously you have stumbled upon some kind of secret observation post.

In the dim moonlight streaming through the window, you see a narrow passage leading into the castle. In a matter of a few feet, the shadows close in so thickly that you can see nothing.

Swiveling the stone entrance shut, you now stand in complete darkness. Holding your hands before you to prevent yourself from walking into a wall, you move into the dark passages of Castle Quarras.

Turn to 43.



151

You stop suddenly as you discover a rack of tools, almost invisible in the shadows, lying in your path. Another half step and you would have stumbled into it! Carefully you resume your search.

Finally you reach a heavy wooden door. Apparently the guards have not noticed you. Tensely you try the heavy latch and breathe a sigh of relief as the massive portal swings open.

Slipping inside, you instantly pull the door closed and turn to let your eyes adjust to the dim light in the corridor. Almost immediately, you see a large shape looming out of the darkness. It's a guard!

Instantly the guard draws his longsword. "Who are you?" he demands. "Why are you slinking around like a burglar?"

Before you can reply, the guard rushes toward you with his blade outstretched. If you have a sword or dagger, turn to 71. If you don't have either, turn to 120.



152

Your desperate leap carries you, still battered and bleeding, to the cold iron bars of the portcullis. You cling there, panting.

Attempting to lift your feet back up to the floor level, you discover that the entire floor has fallen away. You know that hanging from the bars will sap your strength quickly, and you know that soon you will have no choice except to let go.

Deciding that you might as well conserve your remaining strength, you let go of the bars and drop into the unknown darkness below. Fortunately you only fall about a dozen feet and manage to land on your feet in some kind of stone passageway.

Looking around, you try to figure out what your next move is. Turn to 134.

## 153

At the last second, you manage to twist your body around, holding your legs limp and slightly bent at the knees, so that you land on your feet. Your legs collapse downward and absorb some of the force of the fall. Then your chin slams into your knees, and you collapse on your side, rolling over several times before stopping.

Breathing a sigh of relief that you are still alive, you take a brief inventory. Head, legs, arms . . . nothing seems to be broken. But are they functional?

As you stretch and gingerly test your limbs one at a time, you realize that both ankles are badly sprained, you have knocked a tooth out, and your back feels about as strong as a blade of grass. Subtract 8 points of damage from your hit point total.

But at least you are still alive! Of course, you are also back down at the base of the tower that you were trying so desperately to climb. After the harrowing experience of the fall, do you dare try to climb it again? Wouldn't it be much smarter to return to your home and rest, healing your wounds before you attempt this mad adventure again?

Yet you have had to pass many dangers to reach the tower—dangers that you would have to pass again if you gave up now.

The night is not getting any younger, so you know that you must make a decision before any more time

passes. If you decide to head for home, returning to try the mission on another night, turn to **149**. If you choose to try to climb the tower again, turn to **175**.

## **154**

Once again your blade swings true, and the zombie's head flies from its shoulders. Shuddering, you turn away from the gruesome forms lying motionless in the water around you and begin to search for a way out of this foul chamber.

On the far side of the room lies the tunnel you entered from. Opposite this exit is another, equally black opening apparently leading deeper into the castle.

You pause and consider your plight for a minute. If you want to turn back, this might be your last chance. How badly did you suffer in the fight with the zombies? Do you desperately need rest and healing? If so, perhaps you should escape from this nightmarish place while you have the chance.

But your mission still weighs heavily on your mind. You have come this far, so wouldn't it be sensible to continue on to the Gemtower? The other tunnel seems to lead in the right direction.

If you decide to turn back here, turn to **41**. If you elect to continue on with your mission, turn to **186**.

## **155**

You thrust swiftly, but the guard moves out of its path even more swiftly. He counterthrusts skillfully, and a long gash drips blood down your leg.

Deduct 3 points of damage from your hit point total. Deduct only 2 if you have the Cloak of Protection.

Once again you advance, more warily this time, looking for an opening. The guard protects himself,





making a few tentative probes.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 9 or more, turn to 118. If it is 8 or less, repeat this section.



## 156

You barely have time to draw your weapon and extend it toward the onrushing gargoyle before the monster closes the distance between you. Cold steel strikes the monster's stony hide and sparks fill the air, but the creature does not retreat.

Instead, you stumble backward several feet, knocked off balance by the gargoyle's powerful charge. Your blade didn't do much damage, but you realize you didn't have time to put much force behind it.

Still uttering the same vile chuckle, the monster moves in again. Its grotesque wings flap awkwardly, but with considerable strength. You wonder if the creature can fly.

Now you see an opening beneath those sweeping arms with their vicious, claw-studded hands. Darting forward, you stab desperately, hoping that the strength of your thrust will penetrate the gargoyle's stony armor.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 2 to the result if you are using a sword. If the total is 12 or more, turn to 136. If it is 11 or less, turn to 10.

With a dull thud, the haft of your weapon comes down on the unsuspecting ogre. It immediately slumps to the floor, unconscious.

Breaking the huge creature's fall by catching its shoulders from behind, you lower the ogre to the floor of the corridor. Several sputtering torches spread a dim light, so you leap to your feet and pull the door shut.

For the time being, no one seems aware of your presence. You decide to take advantage of these few minutes of security by putting the courtyard far behind you.

Leaving the unconscious monster snoring loudly, you turn and dart into the shadowy passageway. The Gemtower lies ahead!

Turn to 191.



The evil wizard continues on past you, and you begin to draw a breath of relief, when suddenly he whirls and confronts you with glittering black eyes.

"What is a thief doing in this part of the castle grounds?" he demands in a rasping voice heavy with menace.

You make a grab for your weapon, but before you

can draw your blade, the wizard mumbles a brief, strange incantation and gestures in your direction.

The wizard seems to tower over you. In fact, everything seems to tower over you! Flapping your wings, you flutter to the parapet and look around.

It is not until then that you realize that you have been turned into a tiny, twittering sparrow!

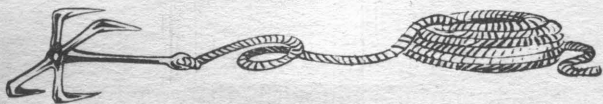
## 159

You decide that you must go ahead. Since no indication of any alarm has reached your ears, you make up your mind to throw the grapple one more time.

The practice you have gained from the first few tosses should help in making a more accurate throw. You know that each of the previous throws must have come very close. Perhaps putting a little more arc on your throw would be enough to get the grapple over the top.

Before you throw the hook, however, you pause to pull your tunic more tightly about you. It seems to be getting unseasonably cold. Then you back away from the tower several steps. Concentrating with all your might, you wind up and release the hook. This time you feel confident of success.

Roll one die and add your agility or your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 131. If it is 6 or less, turn to 200.



## 160

With catlike quickness, you spring to the side. The vile assassin's dagger flashes wide of its mark, and

now he struggles to regain his lost advantage.

Your sword feels as light as a feather in your hand as you swing it around in a lightning thrust. A low grunt is the assassin's last sound as he slumps to the floor and lies motionless.

A low *clink* attracts your attention, and you look down and see the assassin's bulging coin purse lying at his side.

"And how much is a king's life worth?" you muse to yourself, picking up the pouch. To your surprise, the going rate seems to be about two hundred gold pieces!

Stuffing the purse into your pocket, after wrapping it in cloth to muffle any noises that might give you away, you move into the room on the other side of the tapestry. A wide corridor leads in the direction taken by the wizard, while a narrow passage leads in the opposite direction.

Although you can't be certain, you guess that the corridor the wizard followed leads directly toward the Gemtower. That corridor offers the significant disadvantage of the evil wizard's presence, however.

Which way will you go?

If you want to follow the wizard, turn to **20**. If you decide to take the other corridor, turn to **192**.



Your fingers throb from the strain of supporting yourself with only one hand, but your hold does not break. In another second, you have found a hold for your other hand, then your feet. Once again you can breathe easily.

You don't pause to look down, but instead you quickly start inching your way higher up the wall. For the first time, you notice that the stone of the tower seems unnaturally cold.

After a few minutes of steady, relatively easy climbing, you have reached the level of the windows that surround the top of the tower. Each of the six apertures, screened by a translucent sheet of icy blue glass, fills a narrow niche in the wall.

Soon you have worked your way into the niche of the nearest window, where you can catch your breath and decide what to do next. The glass, emanating the bizarre and somehow sinister blue glow, effectively conceals whatever lies within. The window doesn't seem as if it could be opened, although you suspect that you could break the glass easily enough.

On the other hand, if you could get to the top of the tower, you might find some means of entering the room from the roof. Perhaps such an entry would be safer than crashing through a window into a completely unknown situation.

As you examine the wall leading to the parapet, however, your enthusiasm for that idea pales. A nasty overhang extends outward just below the top. Even though you have only another eight feet or so to climb, one slip would mean certain death.

The chill you noticed earlier seems to penetrate to your core. For the first time, you feel frightened, poised in this narrow niche so far from safety. In the past, your cure for fear has always been action,

and you know you can't make an exception tonight.

*I've got to do something!* you think desperately.

But will you attempt the risky climb to the top of the tower, or do you want to throw caution to the winds and burst through the window?

If you decide to break in the window, turn to **99**. If you elect to try to make it to the top, turn to **116**.



**162**

Your desperate leap manages to carry you to the cold iron bars of the portcullis. Dropping your sword, you catch hold of the bars and hang suspended in midair as you hear the trapdoors in the floor finish sliding open.

With a loud clatter, your sword lands on the floor some ten or twelve feet below you. Adjusting your grip to hang as comfortably as possible, you study your situation.

The portcullis ends at the very edge of the pit, so you have nowhere to gain firm footing. The gate blocks the entire passage, so you cannot get around it in the direction you came from.

That seems to leave only one alternative.

With a silent prayer, you release your hold and drop into the inky pit. You land lightly on a smooth floor, absorbing the force of the fall with your bent legs.

Unhurt, you feel around in the darkness for your sword. You feel much more secure when you find it. Then you stand to study your new surroundings.

Turn to **33**.



Gliding backward as swiftly as you can, you are soon out of the path of the huge ogre emerging from the doorway. Although puzzled by the bump as it opened the door into your invisible body, the ogre apparently thinks no more about it and stomps out to join the guards in the courtyard.

"Cursed human fools!" it bellows in a thunderous voice. "What big commotion about?"

In seconds, you have moved back to the door. Soundlessly slipping it open, you move inside to find yourself in a long hallway, illuminated by a few flickering torches.

Many weapons and shields are stored against the walls of the corridor, and loud snoring emerges from the rooms to either side. Obviously you have entered some kind of barracks.

Silently gliding down the corridor, you move toward the dark end of the hallway, perhaps a hundred yards away. No movement disturbs your passage.

If you did not bring a weapon with you, you realize that this is an ideal place to acquire one, since dozens of swords lie here for the taking. You make sure that you are armed before moving on past the barracks. Turn to 191.



Your blade slashes forward, cutting a vicious arc toward the monster's neck. You watch with grim satisfaction as the zombie's head flies through the murky cavern, sinking into the water a dozen feet from the rest of its body. Jerking like an automaton, the body stumbles backward several steps, then it, too, sinks beneath the brown water.

The other two zombies continue their attack, however, and you barely avoid a vicious swipe from a clawlike hand. Recovering your balance as you stumble backward, you turn and face the pair.

The loss of their comrade seems not to have had the least effect on the undead creatures. They wear the same mocking grins, and their plodding attack is relentless.

This time they spread out so that one comes at you from each side. By backing up, you are able to keep



them both in sight, however.

Suddenly you see an opening! The zombie to your left has paused, apparently having stumbled momentarily on some underwater obstacle, while the one to your right closes with unabated vigor.

Whirling away from the zombie that stumbled, you drive your blade straight for the grin on the other's gruesome face. Clumsily, it attempts to block your blow.

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 9 or less, turn to **29**. If it is 10 or more, turn to **174**.



**165**

For a moment, you feel certain that you will plummet to a stony death on the street below. The plaster is crumbling beneath your fingers, and you start to slip from the wall.

But then your foot, desperately searching along the wall for some kind of hold, catches in a small crack. That tiny hold is enough to restore your balance.

Ever so carefully, you probe with your free hand for another hold. Straining to reach high above you, you find a surprisingly wide niche. Stuffing your entire fist into the crack, you pull yourself up to a hold of reasonable security.

Curious, you examine the wide crack. It seems to

reach far into the wall. You can't even reach the back of it with your extended fingers. You notice that it has curiously regular sides, not like the jagged edges of the cracks caused by normal weathering.

You can come to only one conclusion. This niche is man-made!

Once you make this discovery, your mind races. Why is it here? The crack must serve some purpose.

Your examination shows you an area where the stones show signs of abrasion, as if another stone regularly scrapes across the surface. In a moment, you have discovered a catch to release a hidden entrance, high on the face of the wall!

Turning the curiously shaped stone, you see a small section of the wall swing sideways, revealing a dark passage behind the wall! Although too small for a regular entrance, the aperture opens wide enough to admit your supple body.

In an instant, your feet are safe on a hard stone floor. Looking behind, you see that the passage you have entered is more like a window than a door. Obviously you have stumbled upon some kind of secret observation post.

In the dim moonlight streaming through the window, you see a narrow passage leading into the castle. In a matter of a few feet, the shadows close in so thickly that you can see nothing.

Swiveling the stone entrance shut, you now stand in complete darkness. Holding your hands before you to prevent yourself from walking into a wall, you move into the dark passages of Castle Quarras.

Turn to 43.

166

The guard lies motionless at your feet as you satisfy yourself that no one is approaching.

Hearing nothing, you turn and make your way down the corridor, moving deeper into Castle Quarras. The passage soon branches into three corridors, and you choose the central one, which seems to lead most directly toward the Gemtower. You haven't encountered anyone for several minutes.

Suddenly a door in the corridor before you opens, spilling flickering yellow torchlight into the corridor. Hastily you pull back against the wall, looking for someplace to hide.

The sound of tromping boots announces that someone will emerge from the room any second now. Your hands, flattened against the wall behind you, feel a wooden door and you grasp at the opportunity.

Turning quickly, you pull on the latch and the door swings open. All within is darkness. Leaping inside, you turn to try to pull the door shut silently as you see several armed soldiers step into the hallway.

Roll one die and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 5 or more, turn to **129**. If it is 4 or less, turn to **89**.



**167**

Straight as the flight of a crossbow bolt, your blade slashes forward and slices through the monster's icy shell. Again ice shavings fly, but this time you twist

your weapon in an attempt to open a gaping wound in the beast.

With a roar, the creature topples over backward, rolling and shifting on the icy floor like nothing you have ever imagined. Great chunks of ice cascade from its huge mass, and vapor from the wound clouds the air in the room.

Backing away several feet, you notice that again your hand has suffered from the knifelike ice crystals.

Deduct 1 hit point of damage if you do not have the Gem of Magic Resistance.

The monster, however, seems to have suffered more than you. Its thrashing has lessened considerably, and for the time being at least, it seems incapable of defending itself.

Recognizing your opportunity, you dash in and hack mercilessly at the creature with your blade. More chunks of ice shatter off, and the monster soon grows still.

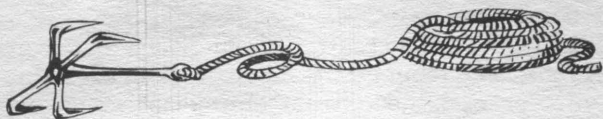
Soon all that remains of your foe is a pile of rapidly melting ice crystals. You realize that you have no proof, except for your wounds and bruises, that the past few minutes have been anything more than a tortured nightmare.

And then your attention turns to the Gem of Illystia, lying unprotected and alluring on its velvet pillow!

Turn to 172.







168

The grapple sails upward through the night sky, trailing the rope behind it like a long tail. Holding your breath, you listen intently.

From out of the darkness above, you hear a dull *clunk*, and you know that the hook has dropped over the parapet. Tensely you pull the rope tight and feel the hook grab hold. Even with all of your weight swinging on the rope, the grapple holds secure.

You place one leather boot, then the other, on the wall of the tower, then begin to climb up the rope hand over hand. Careful not to make any unnecessary noise, you gradually make your way up the side of the lofty spire.

Halfway to the top, you pause and look around. Nothing is moving in the vast plaza below. Although no lights shine directly into the area, you are now high enough to see lights from other towers and courtyards in the vast complex of Castle Quarras.

Satisfied that you have not been detected, you resume the climb. Another several minutes climb finds you nearing the top room of the tower and the unknown chamber from which the ghostly blue glow of the Gem of Illystia emanates.

Here you pause and weigh your options. A translucent pane of cloudy glass covers each of the windows of the tower room. Although the openings appeared quite narrow from below, you see that they are wide enough to allow a man to pass through.

*I wonder if there's anyone in there? you think.*

You see no way, however, of pushing the window open without breaking the glass. It seems to have been built as a permanent fixture. The disadvantage of this approach, of course, is that you will have no idea of what lies within until it is too late to change your mind.

Above you, the grapple still holds secure to the top of the tower. You could climb up another dozen feet and go over the parapet onto the top, rather than trying to break in through the window.

A chill wind has arisen, carrying a piercing bite that easily penetrates your woolen garments. You feel all too conscious of your exposed position, a hundred feet up in the air clinging to the wall of this ominous tower.

You know that each moment you delay exposes you to possible discovery. If you decide to go over the parapet and climb to the top, turn to 113. If you decide to break in the window, turn to 137.



169

Once again your blade darts forward, but this time the monster is ready. Twisting to the side, the gargoyle rakes its claws across you.

Deduct 3 hit points of damage, or 2 if you have the Cloak of Protection.

Falling back, you attempt to recover the initiative

with another aggressive attack. The monster now falls back, but its claws are poised, ready to attack again.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 2 to the result if you are using a sword. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **26**. If it is 11 or less, repeat this section.



**170**

You crash into the first guard like a runaway elephant, sending him sprawling to the floor. Somehow, though, the drunken fool manages to tangle his sword between your legs.

Carried forward by the momentum of your rush, you fall headlong beside the guard. In a few seconds, you are surrounded by your pursuers. They lift you to your feet roughly and disarm you.

Prodding you along before them, the guards make their way through the halls of Castle Quarras. Turn to **21**.

**171**

You aim a blow with the edge of your hand at the guard's wrist, but he quickly whips the sword from the door and confronts you instead with the sharp point of the weapon.

Trying to dodge, you see the weapon lash forward

faster than you can move. Once again you feel the hot flash of pain as the sword draws blood.

Subtract 4 points of damage from your total hit points. If you have the Cloak of Protection, deduct 3 points.

Now the guard backs you against the wall, an evil leer splitting his face. "I've got you now, stranger!" he chortles. "Have another taste of cold steel!"

Again the cruel blades surges forward! This time you have but a moment to react, but you know you must attempt once again to get the weapon away from him.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 11 or less, repeat this section. If it is 12 or more, turn to 127.



172

You sense the gem no longer carries any aura of menace or evil. All such traces of its curse seem to have vanished with the passing of the ice monster.

Reaching out gingerly, you lift the stone from its pedestal and study it. You are surprised at its relatively small size. It seemed much larger when you were fighting for your life to attain it.

As you lifted the gem from its pedestal, you noticed a brief spark of energy, and then the blue glow began to fade. Immediately you feel the air grow warmer, and you feel certain that the effect spreads much farther than this small room at the top of the Gemtower.

You quickly discover that the trapdoor leads to a long spiraling stairway. The base of the stairway ends in an underground passage that leads you on a long subterranean trek to the outskirts of the castle.

Your journey takes the rest of the night, and the morning is in full flower as you squirm from a sewer grate up into a back street several hundred feet outside the castle, the gem tucked securely within your cloak.

Immediately your attention is attracted to a commotion near the castle gates. Cautiously you join a crowd that has gathered there in time to see the castle gates swing open slowly.

"The prisoners are henceforth free!" calls a herald from the top of the castle wall.

"Father!"

"My brothers!"

Cries of joy rouse the city as hundreds of the bewitched king's prisoners, who thought they would spend the rest of their days in the dungeons beneath Castle Quarras, emerge into the sunshine and the embraces of their loved ones.

"A pronouncement!" the herald continues as the tumult dies down.

"The king has awakened from an enchantment, brought about by the evil wizard Kharseron! The wizard has been put to death!" A loud cheer bursts from the crowd, and the herald pauses until it is quiet once more.

"All taxes are hereby reduced to half of their previous levels"—another thunderous cheer—"and today is declared a day of festive celebration and feasting!"

"Long live King Kerral!" The cry echoes from the walls of the city as the crowd surges to spread the news.

With a private smile, you turn to head for home. The crowds that bustle happily around you are completely unaware of how much you've earned a rest from a long night's work.



173

Dodging to the side, you try desperately to evade the longswords driving toward your heart. You are quick enough to move out of the path of one of the weapons, but a searing pain flashes through you as the second blade slashes into your side.

Gasping, you fall backward against the courtyard wall. Knowing that they now have you cornered, the guards move in cautiously, guided unerringly by the telltale spots of blood dripping from your wound to the ground.

As more guards rush up, the first two move in for the kill. Dizziness overwhelms you as you realize that your failure to bring a weapon on this adventure is a mistake that will cost you your life.

174

Your steel blade slashes toward the hideous grin on the zombie's face, striking hard and doing terrible damage. Mangled, the zombie slumps into the murky water, and you turn to face the last of your attackers.

Once again you detect no response to the loss of its fellow attacker from the surviving zombie. Instead it pursues its attack relentlessly. Only by waving your sword constantly in its face can you hold it at arm's length.



You feel better about the odds now, anyway. Even an undead creature is no match for Derek Shadow-walker in a fair fight!

Feeling somewhat reassured, you press your attack. The zombie begins to fall back, apparently having enough instinct of self-preservation to avoid your deadly thrusts.

But you continue to close faster than the zombie can retreat, and in a moment, you see an opportunity. Whistling through the stale air, your sword flashes toward the last of the zombies!

Roll two dice and add your fighting skill score to the result. If the total is 9 or less, turn to **106**. If it is 10 or more, turn to **154**.

## **175**

You've come too far to turn back now, so you decide to ignore your wounds and turn once again to the smooth face of the Gemtower.

Once again you find scant purchase between the stones on its outer surface, but that is all you need. Gradually making your way upward, you carefully negotiate the section where you fell the first time. This time you make it!

Higher and higher, you inch up the surface of the tower. Handholds too small for any normal person, or even a thief with less than your skills, provide all the security you need to make steady progress toward the icy blue windows gleaming high above.

When you are almost to the window, you finally reach a section where even you cannot pick out a decent hold. Eighty feet below, the cold stones of the plaza promise instant death if you should fall.

Finally you locate a small niche barely large enough for your fingernails, but it's the best you can find. The safety of a wide ledge outside the window

beckons a scant ten feet above you.

Taking extreme care, you begin to shift your weight to your fingers and move upward, seeking another hold.

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 5 or more, turn to 4. If it is 4 or less, turn to 27.

176

Your blade plunges true, and this time you feel certain the wizard has finally taken a mortal wound. Staggering backward, he falls heavily against a pedestal. You glance at the pedestal that holds the Gem of Illystia.

The large blue stone pulses with unnatural light, and the wizard turns to caress the gem. Gazing desperately into its impenetrable depths, Kharseron finally slumps forward.



As he falls to the floor, he pulls the stone from the pedestal and clutches it to his bloody breast. His last breath passes the wizard's lips, and the light from the stone dies instantly.

You are left with a beautiful, huge gemstone of perfect quality, but without the demonic life that it seemed to possess only moments earlier.

The tower room, which was totally encased in frost when you entered, has already begun to warm markedly. Rivulets of water trickle through a hatch in the floor similar to the one on the roof above. You have no wish to try your hand at controlling the flying boat, so you decide to use the trapdoor to leave the tower room.

Stopping only to pick up the fabled gem, you pull up the trapdoor and descend a long stairway that spirals down through the tower. At the bottom of the stairway, you discover a burning torch set in the wall of a long tunnel.

You spend the rest of the night wandering through a labyrinth of corridors that twist and wind beneath the castle. By morning, you arrive at a sewer grate outside the castle and make your escape back into the city.

Passing through Quarras, quietly making your way home, you sense a commotion in the city. Cheers and signs of celebration surround you.

"The prisoners are free!" shouts one reveler. "The king has emptied his dungeon!"

"A festival has been proclaimed!" yells another.

Amid the general excitement, you see that a cloud of depression has vanished from Quarras—vanished like the blue light that is forever gone from the Gem of Illystia, nestled snugly within your cloak.

And only you know why they both vanished at the same time.

With one fluid motion, you glide past the ogre and enter the corridor. A few flickering torches illuminate the narrow passage as the brute steps outside and closes the door behind it.

You made it! Safe for the moment, you move into the corridor, mentally trying to picture the exact location of the Gemtower. All seems to be quiet here.

As you slip farther into the fortress, you realize that you are in some kind of barracks area. Weapons line the walls, and you hear loud snoring from several large rooms leading off the corridor.

*To the Gemtower!* you remind yourself, hurrying forward.

Hoping to avoid an awkward situation such as you encountered on the way in, you choose a sword from among the many in the corridor. In another minute you have left the barracks area behind and are moving deeper into Castle Quarras. Turn to 191.



Your feet slide out from under you and you crash heavily to the floor. Reaching out in desperation, your fingers grope for any sort of handhold.

You start to slide down some kind of a chute, swallowing huge mouthfuls of the rushing water and disoriented by the thick darkness. Suddenly your fingers feel a crack in the stone floor of the chute! You stop short, holding tightly to avoid being swept away.

Slowly you pull yourself up a slanting slab of stone. The water seems to rush at you from the left side only, so you guess that the floor might be dry to your right.

Securing your grip on the crack with one hand, you reach to the right and feel a solid piece of stone, several inches above the water level. Quickly you pull yourself up and take a minute to catch your breath.

In another minute, the rush of water has abated and you hear a grating sound of stone against stone, as if a huge trapdoor were slowly swinging shut. The floor of the corridor, several feet deep with rushing water only a few minutes ago, is now nearly dry except for an occasional puddle.

You wonder briefly what fate awaited you had you fallen into the hidden trap, but your thoughts quickly turn to future plans. You start down the corridor again, being careful to stay close to the wall in the area where you triggered the trap.

Suddenly you trip over a raised block of stone and fall heavily onto what feels like stairs. Somewhat painfully, you have discovered a flight of stairs leading upward.

As you climb, you count about twenty steps before the stairway ends in another corridor leading straight ahead. After several steps down the corridor, you bump headlong into a heavy wooden door.

Carefully, seeing with your hands instead of your eyes, you investigate the door. Solid iron brackets hold thick oaken slabs together in a door that is obviously designed to withstand armed attack. But where force fails, often trickery will succeed.

You feel a large iron lock just below the latch. Carefully you remove a small packet from your boot—a packet that you never travel without.

The absence of light presents no problems here, for

you know the tools in this case as if they are a part of you. Selecting by feel a long, flexible piece of wire, you insert it into the lock, then wiggle it back and forth carefully.

Roll one die and add your stealth skill score to the result. If the total is 6 or more, turn to 13. If it is 5 or less, turn to 138.



179

Thanking your foresight for bringing the rope and grapple along, you unsling it from around your shoulder. Swinging the heavy metal hook in a slow circle above your head, you gaze upward and plan your shot.

The top of the tower seems impossibly distant, but you generally regard impossible tasks as interesting challenges. Lengthening the end of the rope, you twirl it faster and faster.

Finally you feel ready. Changing the direction of your swing, you hurl the hook skyward. Rocketing into the night sky, trailing the sturdy rope behind, the grapple vanishes above you.

Roll one die. Add either your agility skill score or your fighting skill score to the result, but *not* both scores. If the total is 8 or more, turn to 168. If it is 7 or less, turn to 59.

180

The stairway ends in a narrow platform, where a ladder climbs to a trapdoor in the ceiling above you.



Wasting no time, you scramble up the ladder and push on the door.

It opens easily, and a warm blue light spills from the opening. You have found the Gem of Illystia! Almost leaping into the room, you stare in awe at the object of your quest.

It rests upon a pedestal lined with the finest of soft velvet. As large as a man's clenched fist, the beautiful stone radiates a blue light that fills the room and creates the frosty glow in the windows spaced around the chamber's outer wall.

Reaching forward slowly, almost reverently, you grab the gem and lift it from the pedestal.

Immediately a strange thing happens. You feel the power of the gem's magic coursing through your body, connecting the icy blue gem with the flaming orange torch in your hand. The magic seems to focus in the region of your heart.

You see great things for yourself—power and wealth beyond your wildest imaginings! The combination of these two magical items, you feel certain, makes you more than a match for the powerful Kharseron himself.

Somehow you also understand that the torch is some kind of catalyst for the gem. Together they create a source of power in excess of anything you could imagine.

And this power is in your hands.

In the back of your mind, words of warning nag at you, but you can't recall exactly what they are. The power coursing through your body overwhelms any thoughts of caution.

Where should you go from here? You have no fear anymore of the guards or even of the wizard in the castle. Even the king himself seems insignificant in your new view of things.

If you want to find out more about the magical powers of the gem and the torch—power that could be yours—turn to **194**. If you are suspicious of this power and do not want to use it, turn to **202**.

**181**

Hot pain flashes through your body as the guard's desperate attack takes you by surprise. Reeling, you stumble against the wall and nearly drop your weapon, your own blow thwarted by the force of the guard's attack.

Subtract 3 points of damage from your total hit points.

Recovering quickly, you see that the guard has dropped into a fighting crouch and is advancing toward you. He seems to have overcome his initial panic.

Once again the huge warrior charges in! His blade swings in a high arc, and you are forced to duck.

But he leaves himself open to a swift counter-thrust, and you waste no time. The throbbing pain of your wounds seems to slow your movements, however, and you are not sure you can keep evading his blade.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Add 1 if you are using a sword. If the total is 9 or less, repeat this section. If it is 10 or more, turn to **12**.

**182**

Your heart sinks as your boot makes an almost inaudible scuffing sound on the hallway floor. Instantly the wizard turns and stares at you with deep, sinister black eyes.

"A thief," he mutters, almost to himself.

You turn to flee as a strange feeling comes over you.

Suddenly you are on all four feet, scuttling along the hallway, which seems to have gotten very large.

You squeak in panic as your tiny claws scratch for footing on the smooth tile, for you have just joined the ranks of the royal mice of Castle Quarras!

### 183

Once again you hear the grapple hit the top of the tower, only to plummet back to earth. This time the grapple does not fall into the pile of rope, however, but lands on the plaza's stone with a resounding *clang*, bouncing several more times and making as much noise as a regiment of heavy cavalry.

Or so it seems to you. The echoes are still resounding through the deserted courtyard as you pounce on the grapple to prevent it from bouncing more.

Hardly daring to breathe, you take a careful look around. Still no light disturbs the blackness of the plaza. No noise emanates from any of the nearby buildings. Maybe it's safe to try again.

On the other hand, caution warns you that it's certainly possible that someone noticed the noise and even now might be quietly observing you. Maybe you should duck back into the security of the corridor and wait to see if anything happens.

Then again, you could always try climbing straight up the tower wall, forgetting about using the rope.

If you choose to run back to the corridor and observe the plaza, turn to **101**. If you decide to throw the grapple one more time, turn to **159**. If you elect to climb the tower without the rope, turn to **68**.

### 184

Finally the section of wall you seek looms above you. Towering forty or fifty feet into the air, its sheer height must convince the guards it is unscalable.



Surely no earthbound creature could ascend its sheer face!

But you intend to take advantage of this false sense of security to gain entry to the huge castle. Swiftly you make your preparations.

Assuming that you brought your rope and grapple along, the climb shouldn't be too difficult. If you didn't bring them, however, the challenge looms much greater.

If you have the rope and grapple, turn to 104. If not, turn to 30.

## 185

You decide to bide your time, in hope that a better chance to escape will present itself. In a few moments, however, the door bursts open and an ogre marches into the room, with several orcs following.

"We're here to get the prisoner!" growls the ogre, stomping over to you.

He grabs your arm to jerk you to your feet, and your hand springs free. The ogre holds your arm tightly in one huge hand as he turns to the guards.

"Can't you humans do anything right? He was all set to escape, and you idiots didn't even know it!"

The orcs retie your bonds firmly, while the ogre continues to berate the guards. Phrases like "Turtle-brain" and "Lizard-spawn" ring in your ears as you feel the ropes cut into your wrists.

In another minute, they haul you from the room. You have no trouble identifying the tall building they take you to: it is the Great Hall of Castle Quarras. Turn to 16.

## 186

Despite your injuries, you decide to press on. Without any further regrets, you enter the dark tunnel

leading farther into Castle Quarras. The water still sloshes about your knees, but you note with relief that there are no crypts along the walls in this portion of the tunnel.

In moments, the light from the grate has been left behind, and again you must resort to feeling your way along the corridor with your hands. You stay crouched slightly, since painful experience has taught you that the support beams sometimes sag.

Shuffling your feet through the stagnant water, you begin to notice a subtle change in the angle of the floor.

All of a sudden, the whole floor drops off to one side, and you hear water pouring violently down some kind of chute. You have triggered some sort of a trap, and now you must struggle to maintain your balance.

Roll one die and add your agility skill score to the result. If the total is 5 or less, turn to **57**. If it is 6 or more, turn to **178**.



**187**

You aim your blow swift and true, but the huge ogre somehow manages to lunge out of the way! Perhaps it heard the cursed squeaking of your wet boots, or maybe it was simply its own animal intuition, but somehow the monster has managed to anticipate your blow and leap aside.

The ogre seems to have little trouble locating you now as, off balance from your unsuccessful ambush,



you attempt to stumble past it.

Instantly the creature's bearlike paws smash into you, and you fly into the wall, bouncing several feet before tumbling limply to the ground, your wind knocked out of you.

Within moments you are surrounded by guards, who soon have you disarmed and bound securely. Jerking you to your feet roughly, they push you toward the dark, towering bulk of Castle Quarras's Great Hall. Turn to 16.

## 188

You seem to have no will to resist the sorcerer. Instead you feel almost a sense of friendship with the magic-user. How could you ever have looked upon this man as your enemy?

Apologizing profusely, you explain about your mission.

"Of course," you conclude, "now that I know what you're really like, I have no intention of stealing the gem! Is there anything you would like me to do for you instead?" you add as an afterthought, feeling guilty about your mission.

In the months that follow, living like a zombie under the powerful charm of the wizard, you perform many useful tasks for him. Kharseron's influence over the king grows, and the repressive laws in Quarras grow even more inhumane.

Finally the day comes when the wizard, bored of your fawning presence, has you shackled and sends you to spend the rest of your days in the dungeons beneath Castle Quarras.

## 189

Your free hands flails out desperately, and your fingers find a narrow crack, a niche so tiny that you

would normally not consider using it as a handhold, but now you have no choice.

Pausing for a few seconds to catch your breath, you cling to the underside of the parapet, desperately conscious of the courtyard so far below. With extreme care, you gradually maneuver your feet up against the wall and begin to inch your way upward again.

Within a minute, you have pulled yourself up the wall and collapsed in a niche between two of the battlements. Sometime later, your breathing finally returns to normal.

Pulling yourself completely over the battlement, you once again enjoy the feeling of something firm beneath your feet. You shiver as an icy wind whistles through your woolen clothing, then start to look for a way down into the tower. Turn to 94.



190

As your hand clutches at your empty belt, you are rudely reminded that you neglected to bring a weapon. Frantically you scan the chamber for anything that you might use to fight the zombies, but you see nothing.

The zombies have spread out, and they are now approaching from three sides. Desperately, you back up, seeking to buy more time in which to form a plan. But your time has run out. Your heel catches on an

underwater obstruction, and you lose your balance, falling into the water.

And then the zombies are upon you. . . .

## 191

Once you are past this area, the corridor becomes very dark. Clutching the hilt of your weapon firmly in your right hand, you run your hand lightly along the wall.

In the dim light of an occasional torch, however, you can see that all benefits of the Potion of Invisibility have worn off. You will need to rely on your own thiefling abilities to escape detection from now on.

"I *must* be getting near the Gemtower," you tell yourself over and over again, trying to convince yourself.

Abruptly a familiar scent reaches your nostrils, and you know that you have reached the castle's stable and livestock area. The corridor ends in a large courtyard, lined on all sides with stalls.

Unlike the other courtyard you passed through, however, this one doesn't seem to be guarded. Carefully you look for the safest route to the corridor you see leading from the other side. Turn to 80.

## 192

You decide that the wizard's presence makes the corridor to the left too dangerous, so you cross the room to investigate the right-hand corridor. Sticking your head cautiously around the corner, you see a long passageway, dimly lit at wide intervals by half a dozen flaring torches. Several half-closed wooden doors lead to rooms on either side of the corridor.

Raucous laughter erupts from one of the rooms, and you deduce that you have happened upon the guardsmen's mess hall. Probably one shift of guards

has just gotten off duty and has come here to celebrate their relief.

Another burst of laughter comes from another room, and you detect the strong scent of ale. Perhaps it would be better to go the other direction after all.

On the other hand, you could probably sneak past these preoccupied guards and make it through the corridor with any luck at all.

If you want to go back and try the other corridor, turn to **20**. If you decide to try to get past the guards, turn to **69**.



**193**

You decide to bide your time and see if the guards leave the courtyard soon. If not, you will need to formulate some other plan.

After several minutes, a couple of the guards wander into one of the many corridors that lead into various parts of the castle from the courtyard. Soon several more follow suit. Within twenty minutes, only three guards remain in the courtyard.

These three, however, stand around the fire and complain bitterly about their lot, in the fashion of soldiers everywhere. You get the feeling that they are on duty here and might not be leaving for some time.

While you have been waiting, your feet have

become thoroughly soaked by the muck at the bottom of the ditch, and a chill has started to make you shiver.

While you lie as motionless as you can and increasingly uncomfortable, you scout the rest of the courtyard. As far as you can tell, the whole area is one big open area. The only feature within its high walls is the fire.

Finally you see one of the three remaining guards bid his companions farewell and stride off into the castle. You think that perhaps this might be your long-awaited chance to escape from the ditch. If you feel exceptionally patient, you might wait a little longer, but otherwise you'll have to get moving.

You decide to try to slip past the remaining pair of guards.

Turn to 66.



**194**

You decide that you can't simply ignore these powerful magic items that have so fortuitously found their way into your hands. Instead you must use them!

The rest of your life passes like a dream. You do not really participate in it. It is more as if you are an observer of someone else's actions.

And those actions are evil indeed.

The wizard Kharseron you vanquish in a horrifying blast of magic, and his power is now yours. The king, obviously under an enchantment, allows you to replace Kharseron at his counsels. Under your guidance, taxes are raised even higher, and the crushing yoke of dictatorship is imposed even more firmly upon the freedom-loving people of Quarras.

You make many enemies, most of whom die by your command. As is always the case with a tyrant such as you, however, your wrongs eventually catch up with you.

In the dark of a winter night, some years in the future, the sure stroke of an assassin's blade finally frees Quarras from the burden of your cruel presence.

195

You estimate that you can circle around to the other side of the castle and reach the storm grate within an hour. That seems faster than going all the way across the city for your rope. You give little serious consideration to the thought of climbing the wall without it.

The streets still show little sign of life, so your journey passes quickly.

Turn to 73.

196

Your body twists like a whirlwind in the air as you try to adjust your fall so that you land on your feet. But the ground is coming up at you too fast.

As you plummet sideways to the ground, you realize that you are doomed to fail. You wonder if the gem in the tower above you is really worth the sacrifice.

Then your body slams into the unforgiving stone and everything goes black.



You sprint silently along the top of the wall, unnoticed by the guards below you. Crouching low as you run, your eyes sweep from right to left, attempting to spot any potential observer before he spots you.

In a few minutes, the narrow wall meets the shadows of a much higher guard tower. Here you pause to catch your breath.

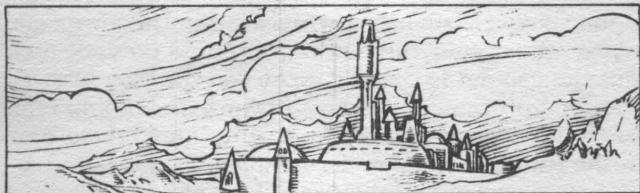
Several hundred yards farther on, the icy blue beacon of the Gemtower marks the goal of your quest. A wide walkway, apparently unguarded, leads in that direction. You can't tell whether it goes all the way to the tower or not.

Still, it does lead toward your destination, so you start down the walkway toward the Gemtower. There is a high rampart to each side, so you find it easy to glide through the shadows and avoid detection.

In another few minutes, you reach the end of the wall. Unfortunately, you find you are still at least a hundred yards from the Gemtower, separated from your objective by a wide, open plaza. The wall you have been following joins another wall here, leading off at right angles to the right and left.

The direction you want to go is forward, however, and you do not see any good way to do that from here.

Turn to 53.



The ends of your fingers barely reach the top of the wall, but it's enough. Literally catching yourself by your fingertips, you are able to pull yourself up until you can swing one foot over the wall.

In another second, you have sprung to your feet to find yourself standing on a flat walkway about a yard wide. The guards call out to each other as they meet below.

"You idiots! He must have gone past you!"

"He didn't go by us. You must have let him get away!"

More growling voices join in, and in the confusion, no one bothers to look up.

Sprinting along the top of the wall, you race in what you hope is the direction of the Gemtower. Turn to 197.



You decide that the mysterious nature of the torch indicates powers best left alone by you, so you start up the spiralling stairway without the torch. You leave the door at the bottom open, however, to give you as much light as possible.

The stairs circle around the inside of a tall cylindrical structure, which you hope is the Gemtower. Each

stair is about three feet wide, leaving a hollow column of space some twelve or fifteen feet wide in the middle of the tower where you can see all the way back down.

No guardrail offers security against a fall, but fear of heights is not one of your weaknesses, so you take scant note of the fact.

You notice as you climb that it seems to get even colder. After five minutes, you estimate that you have ascended half the distance, and you find yourself shivering and drawing your cloak tightly about you.

Suddenly you hear a creaking sound from above. Straining your eyes to penetrate the gloom, you see an immense mass of frost that seems to completely block the entire top of the tower. Even as you watch, the mass seems to grow. The creaking comes as the structure of the tower strains under the ever-increasing weight of the frost mass.

Then all of a sudden it breaks free! A thundering roar fills the tower as huge chunks of ice and snow plummet down the stairs and fall through the central shaft.

Although most of the ice falls through the hollow shaft, many large chunks tumble, with almost diabolical intent, down the stairs toward your exposed position. To one side, you have the outer wall of the tower, and to the other, a sheer drop of more than fifty feet.

Fist-sized blocks of ice begin to pelt you, and then larger pieces start to knock you off balance. Can you keep your balance on the stairs through this unnatural avalanche?

Roll one die and add the result to your agility skill score. If the total is 4 or less, turn to **61**. If it is 5 or more, turn to **124**.





## 200

You feel sure that the grapple flew high enough, but apparently without quite enough angle to catch the top of the Gemtower. Again it plummets back to land at your side, once more clanking loudly in the deserted courtyard.

Disgusted, you start to recoil the rope and wonder what to do next. When you finally reach the grapple hook at the end of the rope, you are surprised to discover that the iron prongs are coated with ice.

Curious, you look up—and your jaw drops in astonishment! Above you, roiling and churning about the top of the tower like an angry thunderhead, writhes a dark, wintry cloud!

You shiver from a sudden chill. It has suddenly grown intensely cold in the plaza.

Something crunches to the ground behind you, and then you hear the sound repeated to your left. Whirling, you see bouncing on the plaza nearby two boulder-sized hailstones. Before you can look upward again, another of the heavy stones thuds into your shoulder and sends you sprawling. Subtract 2 points of damage from your total hit points.

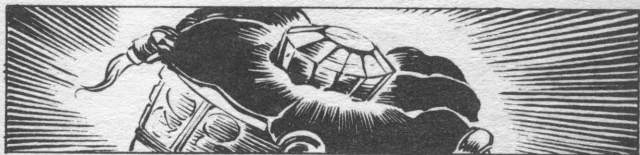
Leaping to your feet, you see the massive hailstones crashing all around you. Forgetting about the rope and grapple, you turn and race for the shelter of the corridor through which you entered the plaza.

Hailstones smash all around you. Several more strike you, before you get out from under the angry

cloud. Roll one die and subtract the resulting number from your hit point total.

Finally you reach the security of the dark corridor, and you turn to watch the unnatural storm gradually weaken and disappear. Only the sea of hailstones littering the courtyard beneath the tower convinces you that you have not lost your mind.

You feel the need to forget your mission for a moment and rest. Warily you slump against a wall of the corridor and slide to the ground. Surely there must be some other way to get at the top of the Gem-tower! Turn to 91.



201

Steeling yourself for action, you confront the assassin with your keen blade. Rage momentarily contorts his features, but he recovers his composure quickly and brandishes his dagger.

But he is too slow.

Steady as the flight of an arrow, your sword flicks outward and transfixes the vile assassin where he stands. Slowly he sinks to the floor. The fight is over before it has barely begun.

A soft clinking sound reminds you of the assassin's purse, which has fallen at his side. Wondering what price is required for the murder of a king, you open it. To your surprise, about two hundred gold coins wink back at you from the soft leather bag.

Tucking the pouch into your belt as a well-earned



reward—after all, you tell yourself, you’ve just saved the king’s life!—you turn and look about the room. To the left, in the direction taken by Kharseron, you see a wide corridor, lit with the clean yellow glow of lantern light.

To the right lies a narrower, darker corridor, roughly illuminated by the sputtering light of occasional torches. To your best estimate, the corridor to the right leads back toward the castle’s outer reaches. The corridor to the left, however, leads deep into the huge castle.

And, you know, it also leads to the powerful sorcerer Kharseron.

Which corridor should you follow?

If you want to follow Kharseron to the left, turn to **20**. If you decide to go down the corridor to your right, turn to **192**.



## **202**

Suddenly the old man’s warning echoes through your mind! Throwing down the torch, you clear your mind enough to smash the evil gem on the floor, shattering it into tiny shards.

Immediately the room grows warmer. You feel calm and peaceful, and you know that your mission has been accomplished.

From somewhere within Castle Quarras, not too

far away, comes a piercing scream. You learn later that this is the dying wail of the evil wizard Kharseron, who perished at the same moment, as far as you can tell, that the torch was extinguished.

You depart from the castle quickly, avoiding contact with any of the guards. It is almost as if you are screened by some kind of magical protection.

As the sun rises over the new day, pronouncements of great good issue from the king's spokesmen. Taxes are reduced immediately, and the restrictive laws of recent months are all abolished.

You keep silent about your own role in these developments, but for the rest of your life, you bask in the satisfaction that can only come from doing a deed of great benefit to so many people.

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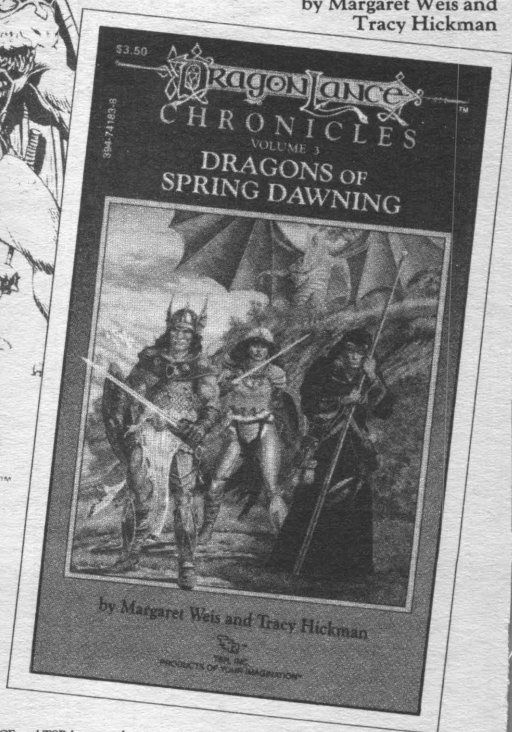
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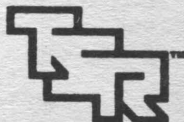
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